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# *Eve's Bayou*

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Shooting Draft

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IN BLACK AND WHITE

IN EXTREME CLOSE UP -- A CHILD'S FACE. She is sleeping. Her eyes move under the closed lids.

WE HEAR a sound like PIGEONS COOING. It amplifies and transforms until it becomes the unmistakable sound of A MAN AND WOMAN HAVING INTERCOURSE. Not the gentle, bittersweet kind -- But hard, violent, thrilling, FUCKING.

THE CHILD'S EYES OPEN

HER POV -- A MAN AND WOMAN are having sex against a wall. It's dark and we cannot see their faces. They are fully clothed, the woman's dress raised around her hips. They move together in slow motion, weirdly out of sync with the sounds. Abstract, hallucinatory.

ON THE CHILD -- frozen in horror. We can see the man and woman reflected in her eyes.

WE HEAR A WOMAN'S VOICE --

EVE (V.O.)
Memory is a selection of images. Some elusive, others printed indelibly on the brain.

BLACKOUT:

BLACKNESS GIVES WAY TO --

EXT. CANE FIELDS -- DAY

Stalks of sugarcane bend in the wind. A flock of egrets take flight.

EVE (V.O.)
The summer I killed my father, I was ten years old. My brother, Poe, was nine and my sister, Cisely, had just turned fourteen.

SLAVE CABINS -- Deserted shells of a distant past.

EVE (V.O.)
(continuing)
The town we lived in was named after a slave. It's said, that when General Jean Paul Batiste was stricken with cholera, his life was saved by the powerful medicine of an African slave woman called Eve.

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In the distance we see A GHOSTLY FIGURE standing in the cane fields. She is straightbacked and proud. No man owns her.

EVE (V.O.)
In return for his life, he freed her and gave her this piece of land by the bayou. Perhaps in gratitude, she bore him sixteen children.

EXT. BAYOU -- DAY

Swampy, secretive and painfully beautiful. Spanish moss hangs from Live Oaks. Cypress knees pierce the murky water. Reflected in the bayou, we see the same GHOSTLY FIGURE. She raises an arm and points...

We travel across the bayou in the direction indicated. As CAMERA skims the water--

BLACK AND WHITE BECOMES COLOR--

Through the tangled bodies of ancient oaks we see we see a house, which in better days might have been called grand.

WE MOVE CLOSER -- Its shingles are weathered. Some of the shutters hang askew. A wide veranda circles the house so that we cannot tell if we are looking at its front or its back. All the lights are on.

EVE (V.O.)
(continuing)
We are the descendants of Eve and Jean Paul Batiste. I was named for her.

As we move closer, we hear MUSIC AND LAUGHTER coming from inside.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- SAME

A raucous party is in full swing. The guests include most of the young professionals in the area, as well as visitors from New Orleans. These are all PEOPLE OF COLOR, representing a hybridism of African, French, Spanish, West Indian and Native American.

Each room downstairs opens onto the next and people are crowded into every area. Music should include BLACK ROCK AND ROLL as well as ZYDECO and BLUES.

MATTY MOREAUX and LENNY MOREAUX slow dance to fast music. He has both hands planted on her substantial ass as her shapely hips move from side to side.

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CONTINUED:

LENNY
(whispering)
Yes, Mama.. You know that, Mama...

BEATRICE BATISTE (or Gran Mere) is sitting with her friend Paige. Beatrice is a haughty, almost white-skinned woman with a mean streak. She looks disapprovingly at Matty's behind.

BEATRICE
If this woman doesn't move her behind from in my face, I am going to smack it.

Two women, LYNETTE and HENRIETTA are also watching Matty and Martin.

HENRIETTA
He better grab it now while it still fits in his hands.

LYNETTE
Man likes his woman with some body...

HENRIETTA
From what I hear, ain't just him getting it.

LYNETTE
You better tell...

Henrietta whispers in Lynette's ear. Lynette gasps.

FLASH--A STILL PHOTOGRAPH -- The women are captured in a picture, gossiping.

BACK TO SCENE -- WE PULL BACK -- Their whispers are lost beneath a hubbub of party chatter.

INT. FRONT HALL -- CONT.

We move through the crowd and picks up TWO BEAUTIFUL WOMEN, ROSELYN (ROZ) BATISTE and her sister-in-law, MOZELLE. Roz is a fashionably slim woman with exquisite taste and the most beautiful smile in the world.

Mozelle is shorter and curvier than Roz. She has flaming red hair which she wears piled on top of her head. There's something dangerous and unpredictable about her.

Both women are slightly drunk. As the camera catches them, Roz bursts into laughter and tries to hide behind Mozelle.

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CONTINUED:

FLASH--A STILL PHOTOGRAPH--Roz is laughing, Mozelle is annoyed.

ON HARRY -- A tall, handsome dark-skinned man. The camera he's holding is an antique. Harry lowers camera.

ROZ
Oh, Harry! Why do you always wait till we're drinking?!

MOZELLE
Put down the camera, darling.

HARRY
Mozelle thinks film makes her look fat.

MOZELLE
Put down the GODDAMN camera, Harry!

Everyone in the immediate area turns to look. Roz points to distract him.

ROZ
Harry, look! Here comes your favorite niece.

ON EVE BATISTE, age ten, THE SAME CHILD WHO WAS SLEEPING IN THE OPENING. Eve is a skinny, tom-boyish girl with red hair and freckles. A black, female version of Tom Sawyer. She carries a large, expensive looking box of chocolates. FLASH--She smiles broadly.

ON EVE AND HARRY --

HARRY
Hey, Red! What you got for me?

EVE
A kiss and a chocolate, for a price.

Harry magically pulls a SILVER DOLLAR from behind Eve's ear.

HARRY
What do I get for this?

Eve's eyes light up.

EVE
Two kisses and all the chocolates you can eat!

He bends down and covers her face with kisses until she's helpless with laughter and then grabs a handful of candy. As

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he eats it Roz approaches. She looks into the box of chocolates.

ROZ
Eve, where did you get those delicious looking chocolates?

Roz and Eve lock eyes. Eve looks guilty but doesn't flinch.

EVE
Butlers pantry. Top shelf on the left. They're the ones Aunt Connie sent from Paris.

ROZ
I thought so. You must have had to work real hard to reach up there.

EVE
I stood on a chair.

HARRY
Now, don't scold the child, Roz. It was worth all the effort. They're good! Crunchy, filled with something...

Mother and daughter stare at each other in silence as Harry grabs more chocolates. They seem about to break into laughter.

EVE
You told me to help serve..

ROZ
Well, don't stand here and let Harry eat them all!

A red-headed boy with the face of an homely angel runs towards them. POE BATISTE is small and delicate for his age. As he runs past Eve, he hits her as hard as he can. He runs to Roz and she picks him up.

ROZ
(continuing)
Here's my baby boy!
(kissing him)
You having fun, honey?

Eve watches her mother and brother with disgust.

EVE'S POV -- a halo of light seems to surround mother and child. Roz obviously adores her son.

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CONTINUED: (2)

EVE extends the box of chocolates.

EVE
(sweetly)
Chocolates, Poe?

Poe digs his hand into the box and stuffs his face full of candy. Eve waits until he's chewed a couple of times.

EVE
(continuing)
They're bees... Chocolate covered bees.

Poe SPITS the entire mouthful.

ROZ
Eve Batiste!

Eve turns on her heel and disappears into the crowd. Poe is fast to follow.

INT. HALL -- CONT.

Poe chases Eve through the crowd of adults. Eve laughs hysterically.

ANOTHER ANGLE -- Through the crowd CISELY BATISTE emerges like a vision. Cisely is an extraordinarily beautiful fourteen-year old. Unlike her red-headed siblings, she has a magnificent head of shining black hair, combed perfectly and tied in a white bow to match her dress. She is poised and confident as she balances a tray of empty and half empty champagne glasses. She moves through the crowd after Eve and Poe.

INT. DINING ROOM -- CONT.

Eve enters with Poe on her heels. He chases her around the dining table.

EVE
You ate BEES! You ATE BEES!!

POE
I'll kill you!! You ugly-scabby knee-freckle face...

Cisely appears in the doorway of the dining room.

CISELY
"Tybalt! Mercutio! The Prince expressly hath forbid this bandying in Verona

(MORE) (CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

CISELY (cont'd)
streets." Really... Make yourselves useful...

She places the tray of champagne glasses on the table. She lifts a half full glass and grins.

CISELY
(continuing)
Help me with the champagne.

The children proceed to drain the contents of any half full glasses, toasting hurriedly.

CISELY
(continuing)
Viva les Batistes!

EVE
Bon Chance et Bon Sante!

POE
Merde!

INT. LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Cisely and Eve, definitely tipsy, circulate serving champagne. Cisely carries the tray while Eve pours glasses.

Roz cocks an eyebrow at her children over her champagne glass. They smile innocently back at her.

A GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN have cleared a space around a dancing couple. The men watch in admiration, the women in awe. One woman fans herself slowly.

THEIR POV -- A DASHING CREOLE MAN dances in a fast jitterbug with Matty Moreaux. DR. LOUIS BATISTE knows that every woman's eyes are on him. He commands attention and has come to expect it.

DIFFERENT ANGLES --

EVE AND CISELY watch their father dance. In their eyes he's a God.

ROZ watches her husband dance. Her love cannot contain his presence.

MARTIN watches his wife dance with Louis, good-naturedly burying his discomfort.

BEATRICE watches in disapproval. Her friend Paige is charmed.

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CONTINUED:

PAIGE
You must be proud. Your son's the best colored doctor in all Louisiana.

BEATRICE
Louis got every women in this parish thinking he's the second coming.

LYNETTE AND HENRIETTA exchange a knowing look as...

MATTY stumbles and falls against Louis, laughing.

MATTY
I used to be able to keep up with you, Louis!

Louis lets her rest against his chest for a moment.

LOUIS
(low)
You just need practice.

Louis spots his two daughters and gestures to them. He takes the tray from Cisely and hands it unceremoniously to Eve. He spins Cisely onto the floor.

LOUIS
(continuing)
Show them how it's done, baby- doll!

Louis leads Cisely in a complicated Zydeco step. She matches his steps in perfect synchronicity, all the while looking at him with adoration that's almost painful to watch.

LOUIS
(continuing)
Does my daughter know how to dance?

THE CROWD
Yes!

LOUIS
I said, does my daughter know how to dance?!

THE CROWD
Hell, yes!! Goddamn right!! Mais, oui!!

ANGLE ON EVE -- holding the huge tray of glasses. She watches them like a jilted lover, devastated by rejection.

Uncle Harry gently takes the tray from Eve.

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CONTINUED: (2)

HARRY
Wanna dance, Red?

For a second she looks as if she doesn't recognize him.

EVE
No, thanks...

Eve turns and runs, pushing through the crowd.

INT. FRONT HALL -- CONT.

Eve runs down the hallway to the front door. She makes sure no one is watching her before she slips out.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- NIGHT

Eve runs across the wet yard and into the carriage house.

INT. CARRIAGE HOUSE -- CONT.

The darkness is briefly illuminated as Eve enters. She closes the door behind her and turns on a light.

The carriage house is from the plantation age, when stockpiling was a necessity. The dusty shelves which rise to the ceiling are mostly unused, the food on them stale, vermin infested. Racks of wine fill one wall.

Eve turns off the light and settles down into the tattered seat of an old broken down carriage.

The laughter and sounds from the party seem distant. They fade further as Eve's eyes start to close...

SUDDENLY THERE'S LIGHT as the door opens. We don't know how much time has passed, but there's less party noise.

DARKNESS AGAIN--the door is closed. We hear a MAN and WOMAN'S muffled VOICES.

WOMAN
Ohh, Lord! I can't see a thing.

MAN
Gimme your hand...

As they step into the moonlight we see that it's LOUIS AND MATTY. He pushes her up against the shelves and kisses her roughly. She grabs handfuls of his hair and arches away from him. He raises her dress over her thighs as she fumbles with his belt.

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CONTINUED:

ANGLE ON EVE -- her eyes open. She is only a few feet away from them, but they are oblivious to her. She is frozen in horror. She cannot move or look away.

ON LOUIS AND MATTY -- locked in passion. Matty throws her head back, bites her hand to keep from screaming as he plunges into her, fucking her--

ON EVE -- She lets out a sound which is a GASP FOR AIR--

MATTY
What the fuck--

LOUIS
Shhh!

Louis and Matty instantly pull apart and begin arranging their clothes. Louis fumbles for the light switch and turns it on. Eve gasps for breath.

Anger electrifies Louis as he sees Eve. For a second it seems that he might strike her--

And then instantly the anger slips away, leaving him drained and guilty. He crosses to Eve and picks her up. She's hyperventilating.

LOUIS
(continuing)
Shhh... Daddy didn't mean to scare you.. Shhh.. It's okay.. Breathe, little baby...

EVE
(gasping)
Sorr.. sorry... I.. I was.. sleep...

LOUIS
It's okay, baby. You scared us too. You sure did.

He shrugs at Matty over Eve's shoulder. Perhaps another time?

LOUIS
(continuing)
Eve, you remember Matty Moreaux?

He sets her on the floor and turns her to face Matty. Neither the woman nor the girl can meet each other's eyes.

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CONTINUED: (2)

EVE
Hi, Mrs. Moreaux... Sorry I.. scared you.

MATTY
Almost gave me a heart attack.

LOUIS
Would you mind fixing me a drink while I talk to my daughter?

Matty pats herself down and combs through her hair with her fingers.

MATTY
Course not. Night, Eve.

EVE
Night, Mrs. Moreaux.

Matty's dress clings to her behind as she walks to the door.

Louis lifts Eve's chin and forces her to look at him. He meets her eyes candidly, as if defying her to think badly of him. He wipes the tears from her eyes.

LOUIS
Wanna go outside?

Eve nods.

EXT. LIVE OAK -- NIGHT

Louis leads Eve across the yard and underneath the overhanging limbs of a massive live oak. They stand looking out into the bayou. A fine mist hangs in the air, glittering in the Spanish moss like jewels.

LOUIS
Tomorrow they'll be slugs everywhere...

Eve is silent. Louis pulls her close and kisses her head.

LOUIS
(continuing)
You know, Daddy loves you.. So much.

EVE
I know.

LOUIS
I know, you know.

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CONTINUED:

Silence.

EVE
...You love Mama?

Louis lifts her up and sits her on a low hanging limb so that he can look into her face.

LOUIS
Your mama is the most perfect, beautiful woman I've ever met. Your mama is a lady. And I will always love her. Understand? Always.

Eve is not fully satisfied with this answer and Louis knows it. They are silent for a moment.

EVE
Daddy?

Louis tries to prepare himself for the next question, whatever it might be.

LOUIS
(after a long beat)
Yeah...

EVE
Why don't you ever dance with me?

Louis laughs with relief.

LOUIS
Baby, how can you say Daddy never dances with you?

EVE
When we're alone and stuff. But not at parties. You always dance with Cisely.

LOUIS
I tell you what.. From now on, we'll dance at every party, how 'bout that?

Roselyn crosses the yard. The breeze lifts her dress and hair.

ROZ
There you are! I was looking for you two! Eve, it's past midnight. Your cohorts are already in pajamas.

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CONTINUED: (2)

EVE
I was talking to Daddy.

ROZ
Well, I guess that's legal. Come here, you...

Roz gathers Eve into her arms and makes a big show of inspecting her eyes.

ROZ
(continuing)
You sober?

EVE
Yes, ma'am.

ROZ
Barely. You have fun tonight?
(Eve nods)
I bet you did. Go say good night to your Uncle Thomy before I put him down.

EVE
I have to?

ROZ
Yes, ma'am. Then straight to bed. And don't forget to say your prayers--

EVE
(continuing for her)
--Never cheat the Man upstairs!

Eve giggles and Roz kisses her.

EVE
(continuing)
Night, Mama. Night, Daddy.

ROZ & LOUIS
Night, baby.

Eve exits leaving Roz and Louis alone. He keeps his distance from her.

ROZ
What's wrong with her?

LOUIS
She'll be fine.

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CONTINUED: (3)

ROZ
What about you?

LOUIS
What about me?

ROZ
You sober?

LOUIS
(smiling)
Barely.

ROZ
You coming in?

LOUIS
In a minute.

She turns to go.

LOUIS
(continuing)
Roz...

ROZ
Yeah?

LOUIS
Good party, wasn't it?

ROZ
Oh, yeah.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS -- SAME

The crowd has thinned out considerably.

EVE crosses to a door which has been closed all evening. She opens it, tentatively, and enters.

INT. THOMY'S ROOM -- CONT.

A large parlor has been converted into an invalid's room. Old fashioned gas lamps cast small pools of light into the shadows. On one side of the room is a couch, table and chairs. On the other, an antique hospital bed. Large windows open onto the front veranda.

A man, THOMY, sits motionless in a wheelchair in front of the window. Thomy is the children's great-uncle. He is strangely illuminated in the moonlight.

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CONTINUED:

Eve crosses slowly towards him. She stands a little away.

EVE
Hi, Thomy. I came to say good night.

For half a moment neither of them move, then suddenly Thomy's arm flails out and Eve jumps. He turns his face towards her.

His eyes are gentle. The illness which has devastated his body, has left his mind cruelly intact. He speech is almost impossible to understand.

THOMY
Hiiii...

EVE
Hi!

THOMY
(knowingly)
Paaarrrty...

EVE
Yes, big party.
(drinking gesture)
Cocktails. You didn't miss anything. It was boring.

Thomy opens his mouth wide and a terrible sound comes out, like a horse in pain. We gradually realize he is laughing. Eve laughs nervously with him. She backs towards the door.

EVE
(continuing)
Well, goodnight..

THOMY
Booooorring...

CLOSE ON THOMY -- A tear runs down his face.

Eve hurriedly exits to THOMY'S LAUGHTER.

INT. EVE'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Eve enters the small suite that she shares with Cisely. She tears off her dress and changes quickly into pajamas. The light is on in the adjoining bathroom.

INT. EVE BEDROOM/BATHROOM -- CONT.

Cisely is brushing her teeth.

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CONTINUED:

CISELY
Where were you? I looked all over.

EVE
I was outside with Daddy. Then I said good night to the croaker.

CISELY
Before that.

EVE
I was out in the carriage house.

CISELY
Well, you was in there a long time.

EVE
I fell asleep.

Eve suddenly starts to cry. She buries her face in her hands. Cisely comes out of the bathroom and pulls her to the bed.

CISELY
What is it, Rabbit?

Cisely pulls Eve's hands from her face.

CISELY
(continuing)
Whatsamatter? What is it?

EVE
Nothin'.

CISELY
Don't tell me it's nothin'.. What's wrong? What?

Eve takes a long beat before speaking.

EVE
I saw Daddy... I was asleep and I woke up and Daddy...

CISELY
(spooked)
What? What?!

EVE
Daddy and Misses Moreaux...

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CONTINUED: (2)

CISELY
(shaking her)
What about Daddy and Misses Moreaux?!

EVE
I.. I saw them kissing..

CISELY
Don't be stupid!

EVE
It's true! I saw them! He had his hands on her--

CISELY
Come on, Eve. Daddy wouldn't TOUCH that cow!

EVE
It's true!!

WE FLASH TO THE SCENE AS EVE REMEMBERS IT -- Louis kisses Matty's neck. She throws hear head back and bites her hand to keep from screaming--

EVE (OVER)
He was all up against her and her dress was all up and he was kissing on her and rubbing her and pushing against her--

BACK TO SCENE -- Cisely slaps Eve across the face!

CISELY
That's a LIE!!

EVE
I saw them--

Cisely covers her ears with her hands.

CISELY
(over)
You're lying--

EVE
He was kissing her and he was up against her and they were rubbing--

CISELY
(hysterically)
Liar, liar, liar!!

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CONTINUED: (3)

They're both sobbing. Suddenly Cisely is calm, her eyes wide and haunted.

CISELY
(continuing)
Stop! Stop it.. I'm gonna tell you what happened...

Cisely wraps Eve in her arms. They sink to the floor.

CISELY
(continuing)
Shhh.. Lookit... They were just talking... It's okay... He told her a joke and they were laughing and they woke you up and it looked like...

EVE
I don't know...

CISELY
They're old friends, you know that, and Daddy was tickling her or telling her a joke, you know how he does, and you woke up and it looked like...

EVE
You think so?

CISELY
Yeah.

WE FLASH TO -- CISELY'S VERSION OF THE SCENE IN THE CARRIAGE HOUSE -- Louis whispers something in Matty's ear. She laughs and falls against him, throwing her head back. She bites her hand to stop her laughter.

THE GIRLS are also in the scene, sitting in the old carriage, their arms still around each other. The laughing adults don't see them. Cisely looks straight at her father and Matty as she talks to Eve.

CISELY
(continuing)
They came in to get some more wine. And Daddy told her a joke and she fell against him laughing and they woke you up.

BACK TO SCENE -- Both girls are still crying but they are calmer. They cling to Cisely's story.

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CONTINUED: (4)

EVE
You sure?

CISELY
I'm certain.
(laughing)
I mean, what would Daddy want with Matty Martin? Mama's the most beautiful woman in the world.

Cisely is the voice of reason and authority. Eve feels ashamed for having doubted her father.

CISELY
(continuing)
Now come on. It's late.

Cisely gets up and crosses to her room. In the door she turns.

CISELY
(continuing)
You scared me.

INT. SECOND FLOOR/MAIN HALLWAY -- LATE NIGHT

We hear VOICES RAISED IN ANGER coming from downstairs.

Eve peeks out of her door, her face sleep stained. After a moment Cisely's door also opens. The sisters exchange a look.

CISELY
Shhh!

She leads them across the hall to the main staircase. They peek over the bannister. They sneak down a few more stairs and peek through the railings.

CHILDREN'S POV -- DOWNSTAIRS AND FRONT DOOR

All the guests have left with the exception of Harry and Mozelle. Harry is arguing loudly with Louis, Roselyn and Mozelle.

HARRY
I've been driving since I was eleven years old! I'm driving my own damn self home!

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CONTINUED:

LOUIS
Kill yourself then, old man, but you're not taking my sister with you.

MOZELLE
Give me the damn keys, Harry!

HARRY
You ain't driving me nowhere, woman.

ROZ
That's it! You're both staying here.

Harry opens the front door. The air is thick with mist.

HARRY
I'm leaving, I'm driving, I'm taking my damn wife--

Louis follows Harry outside.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- NIGHT -- CONT.

Louis pushes Harry in the chest.

LOUIS
You're gonna let Mozelle drive, or you're gonna stay here, or you're gonna get your ass kicked!

HARRY
I may be drunk, old man, but I'll whip your butt!

They fight. Mozelle and Roz rush to break them up.

MOZELLE
(Patois)
Stop it, you assholes!

ROZ
Stop, Louis! STOP!

Louis and Harry pull apart.

HARRY
Nigger, just cuz you a doctor, you think you know every fucking thing! You don't know every fucking thing!

The men start to fight again and Mozelle stands between them.

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE
Dammit, Harry--

EXT. FRONT DOOR -- CONT.

Cisely runs out front door and on to the lawn.

CISELY
Daddy! Uncle Harry! Stop it!

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- SAME

The four adults turn to look at the child. Eve hangs back on the veranda as Cisely runs to her father.

CISELY
(scolding)
It's late. You want to raise the dead?

Louis and Harry look deflated and sheepish in front of the child.

ROZ
Get back in the house, Cisely, you're not dressed!

Roz takes Cisely by the arm and pulls her towards the house.

ROZ
(continuing)
Do you know what time it is? Go on back to bed.

Cisely turns to glare sternly at Louis and Harry.

CISELY
Not till Daddy comes in.

Louis puts his arm around Harry.

LOUIS
You're a real jackass sometimes, you know that?

HARRY
Fuck you, Doc...

Mozelle walks up to Harry and hold out her hand. He docilely hands over the keys.

MOZELLE
Get in the damn car before I kill you.

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CONTINUED:

HARRY
Baby, don't talk that way.

She leads Harry away.

MOZELLE
Say goodnight, Harry.

HARRY
Night, y'all...

LOUIS
Night, old man. Night, Sis.

Roz stands on the veranda with Cisely and Eve.

CISELY & EVE
Night, Aunt Mozelle. Night Uncle Harry.

MOZELLE
Night, y'all. Be good.

Louis comes onto the porch. He's soaking wet. Roz looks at him and shakes her head.

ROZ
Jesus!

AN OLD CADILLAC is parked on the lawn. Mozelle gets in the drivers seat and Harry gets in next to her. The Cadillac pulls out.

EVE'S POV -- SLOW MOTION Harry wave through wet car window as they drive off.

BLACKOUT:

DREAM VOID -- BLACK AND WHITE

A SPIDER spin a web to the sound of ticking... A GRANDFATHER CLOCK ticks... A SILVER DOLLAR spins in the air...

RAIN falls in glittering sheets--

THE CADILLAC moves past us in SLOW MOTION, water spinning from its wheels. A HAND WAVES through wet glass.

LOW ANGLE -- THE WHEELS LOCK AND THE CAR SKIDS as brakes are applied. We hear a CRASH and the wail of A CAR HORN.

THE SILVER DOLLAR settles. THE CLOCK STOPS.

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INT. EVE'S BEDROOM -- SAME

Eve wakes, terrified. She stares into the darkness with haunted eyes. Gradually her eyes drift towards...

THE SILVER DOLLAR on the night table next to her.

BLACKOUT:

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- CEMETERY -- DAY

LONG ANGLE -- The graveyard is old and weepy with willows.

EVE gets to her feet, brushing dirt from her knees. She gathers up a picnic basket, leaving flowers on a fresh grave.

CLOSER -- The headstone reads, HARRY DELACROIX, 1931 -- 1966 -- BELOVED HUSBAND...

Eve walks past revealing --

ANOTHER HEADSTONE next to it, identical but older. MAYNARD AUGUST KINGSTON -- 1925 -- 1961 -- BELOVED HUSBAND...

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- DAY

Eve walks through town carrying the picnic basket. She jumps cracks on the sidewalk and hums to herself.

EXT. MARKETPLACE -- RIVERSIDE

An outdoor market has been set up by the river. Venders sell fruit, vegetables, teas, coffees, etc.

Eve wanders through the market browsing the wares. She is mostly ignored by the venders who go after more serious shoppers.

She pauses in front of a pineapple stand. The vendor is helping an adult. She picks up a fruit.

EVE
Hey, sir.. How much for this pineapple?

The vendor ignores her.

EVE
(continuing)
I said, how much for this pineapple?

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

VENDOR
(impatiently)
Twenty-five cents. You want it?

Eve pretends to consider this.

EVE
That's too much!

EVE TAKES OFF -- pineapple in one hand, picnic basket swinging in the other. She runs, weaving her way through the crowd.

VENDOR
Hey!!

At the far end of the market --

AN AGELESS WOMAN with a mane of white hair sits behind a display of religious articles, candles, effigies, roots, oils, powders, incense. ELZORA has strangely beautiful eyes and a commanding presence.

As Eve runs by, Elzora fixes her with a look. Eve stops in her tracks, dropping the pineapple.

ELZORA
Bad girl.

The vendor runs up behind Eve and picks up the fruit. He gives her a swat as he walks away, mumbling in French.

Eve and Elzora lock eyes. Elzora laughs softly.

ELZORA
(continuing)
Bad girl.

With a great effort, Eve turns and runs from the market. We hear the cackle of ELZORA'S LAUGHTER. She looks back over her shoulder.

EVE'S POV -- Elzora is right behind her, dead on her heels. She hauls ass, terrified.

IN THE DISTANCE BEHIND HER -- Elzora is at her booth as before. She chuckles as Eve disappears around a corner.

EXT. STREET -- CONT.

Eve continues running through town.

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CONTINUED:

ANOTHER STREET -- CONT.

The colorful Victorians are quaint, as opposed to grand. Eve stops in front of one with intricate trim and weathered shingles.

EXT. MOZELLE'S HOUSE -- CONT.

The house looks as if it hasn't been painted in fifty years. Once, long ago, it was pink. Eve pauses on the porch to catch her breath.

INT. MOZELLE'S HOUSE -- CONT.

The house could be very beautiful inside. It has dark wood panelling and worn, Persian carpets. However, it's CRAMMED with antiques, rugs, lamps, bookcases and cabinets. Almost all the available wall space has been covered with paintings and photographs. To make matters worse, it's a mess.

As Eve opens the door, dust swirls in the sunlight. She crosses to the stairway and goes up.

INT. UPSTAIRS -- CONT.

The second floor is worse than the first. Things have been indiscriminately collected over the years; bad art as well as good art, valuable antiques and worthless junk, magazines and periodicals ten years old. Eve knocks on a door before entering.

INT. MOZELLE'S BEDROOM -- CONT.

A massive, dark bedroom set makes the room look small. The bed is wood canopied with hanging curtains. Mozelle lies curled under the covers. Eve enters and sits on the bed.

EVE
Aunt Mozelle.. Wake up.

Mozelle opens her eyes.

MOZELLE
What for?

EVE
You got clients coming.

INT. BEDROOM -- A LITTLE LATER

Mozelle sits listlessly at her vanity table while Eve combs her hair. She looks up at her reflection and gasps.

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CONTINUED:

EVE
(continuing)
You don't look so bad.

IN MIRROR -- MOZELLE AND EVE

THREE MEN ARE IN THE ROOM WITH THEM -- A young handsome man in uniform, a portly man in his thirties, and HARRY! THE GHOSTS OF MOZELLE'S HUSBANDS stand as still as statues.

Mozelle watches them in the mirror.

MOZELLE
I loved them... I swear I did.

Eve is oblivious. She combs her aunt's hair.

EVE
I know. It's not your fault they die.

Mozelle's eyes fill with tears. She smiles sadly. Eve moves to the enormous, mirrored wardrobe.

EVE
(continuing)
What you wanna wear?

MOZELLE
Black.. I'll never wear another color for the rest of my life.

Eve opens the closet. It's full of black dresses.

EVE
Which one?

INT. LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Mozelle is wearing a pretty black dress. She reclines on the sofa sipping sherry.

Eve is attempting to clean the cluttered room. On the mantle are framed photographs of Mozelle's husbands. Eve dusts them each with reverence. She lingers over a PHOTOGRAPH OF THE MAN IN UNIFORM.

EVE
Which one did you love the best?

MOZELLE
Oh, I don't know, Eve. They was all different...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE (cont'd)
(following Eve's look)
Anderson was the handsomest man I'd ever seen, you uncle Harry was the sweetest, and Maynard... Maynard loved me most of all.

She sips sherry and sighs.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
You know, even when I was your age, before I ever did the counselling, I could look at people, complete strangers, and see their whole lives so clear... But I looked at each of my husbands--never saw a thing.
(she sighs)
That's the way it always is... Blind to my own life.

We hear a DOORBELL -- Mozelle stands up and smooths her dress.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
Oh, well...

She points to a chair in the corner.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
Now go on, make yourself invisible for a while. If you're quiet, you'll be able to hear.

Mozelle leaves Eve and goes to answer the door.

INT. FRONT HALL AND PARLOR -- CONT.

Mozelle, all business, opens the door with a smile.

HILARY BALL, a stately, middle-aged woman enters. The two women embrace tightly.

HILARY
I'm so sorry about Harry, Mozelle. I don't know why the Lord sees fit...

Mozelle gently gestures for her to be silent.

MOZELLE
We're all servants of Divine Will. He giveth, He taketh away... Oh, well..

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CONTINUED:

Mozelle leads Hilary to a small parlor area with a table and two chairs. She lights candles. The women sit across from each other. Both fold their hands and bow their heads. They say THE LORD'S PRAYER together.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
Close your eyes..
(praying)
Lord, lead us in the direction of righteousness. Advise us that we may become wiser in thy will..

BOTH WOMEN
Amen.

MOZELLE
Speak your mind, my friend.

HILARY
It's my boy, Barry. My boy has run off and I don't know where. My husband and I been down on our knees prayin' for two months.. I pray for patience..
(she begins to cry)
But I can't take it any more.. I have to know...

Mozelle extends her hands palm upward and Hilary places her palms on Mozelle's.

CLOSE ON MOZELLE -- Her eyes close. There is no effort, no deep trance, BUT INSTANTLY WE SEE A SUCCESSION OF IMAGES --

ARM--SYRINGE FALLS--HEAD ROLLS BACK--DIRTY WHITE TILES--AMBULANCE LIGHTS--

BACK TO MOZELLE -- She opens her eyes and sighs.

MOZELLE
He's alive, Hilary. You'll find him in Detroit, at St. Joseph's hospital. Next Tuesday.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- SAME

Eve sits in the chair, listening intently.

INT. FRONT HALL/PARLOR -- SAME

Mozelle stands.

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CONTINUED:

HILARY
Is he sick! Tell me!

MOZELLE
Your son's on drugs. Go home and pray for strength. You'll need strength to help him through this.

Mozelle moves to the front door. Hilary obviously wants more information but she digs in her bag for a bill and leaves it on the table without speaking.

FRONT HALL/PARLOR -- LATER

A SUCCESSION OF IMAGES -- A BOTTLE SMASHES--A HAND STRIKES A WOMAN'S FACE--HER HEAD IS TURNED VIOLENTLY, HER HAIR FANS OUT--

CLOSE ON MOZELLE -- She opens her eyes.

MOZELLE
She misses you, Jonah. She'll be back.

JONAH, a heavy-set man in his fifties sits across from her. Mozelle stands and moves to the door.

JONAH
Will she stay home, this time?

MOZELLE
Don't beat her this time. Might help.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- LATER

The room has grown shadowy. Eve is curled in the chair, half asleep. WE HEAR VOICES from the parlor...

MOZELLE (OFF)
The money's gone, Madame Renard. Your niece spent it all.

MADAME RENARD (OFF)
How will I get it back?

ANGLE TO INCLUDE -- Mozelle's shadow as she crosses to the front door. She is followed by the shadow of a small, stooped woman.

ON MOZELLE --

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE
The money's gone, Madame Renard. She already spent it. I'm sorry.

MADAME RENARD, a fragile old woman, breaks down in tears.

MADAME RENARD
Help me! Oh Lord, help me! How am I going to live? Help me!

Mozelle puts her arms around the sobbing old woman and sighs. After a long moment she leads her back to the table. Mozelle opens a small cabinet and removes a handful of items. She lowers her voice.

MOZELLE
Get a small bag of the skin of Chamois. In it place this piece of Lode Stone and a piece of John the Conqueror root..

INT. LIVING ROOM -- SAME

Eve is instantly wide awake and listening. Because Mozelle is whispering, it is difficult to make out the words. SHE HEARS...

MOZELLE (O.S.)
...piece of Devil's shoe string... right hand sprinkle five drops of Holy Oil.....

Eve slips quietly from the chair and crawls over to the doorway. She peeks into the other room.

EVE'S POV -- Mozelle and the old woman lean across the table towards each other.

MOZELLE
Pray with me.
(praying)
O Lord bestow Thy grace on us, though we be unworthy to lift our eyes to Heaven by the multitude of our offenses! O Lord, O God, full of compassion, aid us in this hour of great need that Thy name may be blessed for ever. Amen.

Mozelle stands and crosses to the door.

MADAME RENARD
Thank you, thank you, Madame. I'm hardly in a position to reward your great kindness, what with my money gone...

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE
That's okay, darlin'. Keep the bag next to your skin and say the prayer each Friday.

MADAME RENARD
I'm so sorry about your husband. He was a fine man.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- SAME

EVE'S POV -- Madame Renard kisses Mozelle's hand as she exits.

Mozelle closes the front door and sighs. As she enters the living room, Eve jumps away from the door and pretends to look through a bookcase.

MOZELLE
Don't be cute.

EXT. STREETS OF TOWN -- EVENING

Eve and Mozelle walk through the streets of Eve's Bayou. Eve is excited.

EVE
You told daddy you didn't practice no voodoo.

MOZELLE
She was desperate.

EVE
Does it work?

MOZELLE
We'll see.

EVE
Well, what if it don't?

MOZELLE
(laughing)
I don't think she'll sue me.

MOS -- Eve babbles excitedly as Mozelle drifts off into a pool of sadness.

LONG SHOT -- Eve and Mozelle are tiny figures against the old buildings. The cobbled streets are quiet as the dinner hour approaches.

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INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- FRONT HALL -- EVENING

Eve and Mozelle Enter.

Roselyn sits on a sofa in the hallway. She's obviously been crying.

MOZELLE
Oh, Jesus.. What is it now?

INT. FRONT HALL -- LATER

THE PARLOR DOOR IS closed. We hear VOICES from within, Roz's tearful, Mozelle's comforting.

ROZ (O.S.)
How dare she call my house!

MOZELLE (O.S.)
She didn't say who she was?

ON EVE AND POE -- sitting in the hallway, listening.

ROZ (O.S.)
Just some woman. A patient of his!

MOZELLE (O.S.)
What did you say?

ROZ (O.S.)
I said, I've got THREE of his damn babies!

Eve and Poe exchange a look.

CISELY comes down the stairs to her brother and sister. Her cheeks are flushed with color. She whispers angrily.

CISELY
There is absolutely nothing in this world lower than hovering at doorways eavesdropping on the conversation of others!

EVE
This is important!

CISELY
It's private! If they'd wanted you to hear they'da left the door open!

Neither Poe nor Eve move. Cisely heads towards the parlor.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

CISELY
(continuing)
I'm telling.

Eve and Poe dash upstairs. Cisely turns to watch them. She lingers in the hallway and listens. We hear BEATRICE'S VOICE...

BEATRICE (O.S.)
Maybe she's lying. Women been lying 'bout that since God invented 'em.

FRONT DOOR -- LOUIS ENTERS.

He's been drinking but he looks cheerful and calm. Cisely rushes to him.

CISELY
(whispering)
Daddy, you're in trouble. Go down to King's Bar and come back later. Go quick! They're really mad!

LOUIS
Who's mad, baby?

Cisely glances toward the parlor which is now silent. Louis throws open the parlor door revealing--

ROSELYN, MOZELLE AND BEATRICE glaring back at him.

Louis laughs.

LOUIS
(continuing; to Cisely)
Who them? They're always mad!

BLACKOUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET -- EVE'S BAYOU -- DAY

A BLACK MEDICAL BAG swings back and forth.

Louis and Eve walk through town. Louis carries himself with pride, occasionally waving to strangers. Eve skips along beside him.

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EXT. RENARD HOUSE -- FRONT PORCH -- DAY

A TINY, FRAIL ARM is encircled within A BLOOD PRESSURE MONITOR.

Madame Renard reclines on a porch chair. Louis kneels in front of her. The elderly woman looks at him lovingly as he finishes taking her blood pressure.

LOUIS
Good girl. You've been taking the pills.

MADAME RENARD
Oh, yes, doctor. I'm feeling much better...

One hand reaches for A BAG OF CHAMOIS which hangs half-hidden in her withered cleavage. Madame Renard smiles.

MADAME RENARD
(continuing)
Everything will be just fine now.

EVE sits on the bottom step, playing with a cricket. She watches as Louis stands and kisses the old woman on the forehead.

LOUIS
That's right. Everything will be fine, Louise. Just keep taking the pills.

INT. HOBBS HOUSE -- DAY

A STETHOSCOPE rests against caramel colored skin. The bosom rises and falls.

STEVIE HOBBS sits up in bed, her body arranged to accentuate her overblown, frivolous beauty.

Louis sits across from her. Though neither move or talk, the air between them vibrates. Finally, Louis smiles, breaking the tension.

LOUIS
Your lungs sound clear as a bell, Stevie...

EVE stands in the doorway, watching. Louis packs up the stethoscope and stands.

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CONTINUED:

LOUIS
(continuing)
I think you're going to live.

He turns towards the door.

STEVIE looks disappointed. Her voice quavers a heartbeat from desperation.

STEVIE
Doctor...

Louis freezes, his back to her.

STEVIE
(continuing)
Could you give me a little something for the pain?

Louis doesn't turn. His eyes meet Eve's, levelly.

LOUIS
Eve, go on outside and play.

Eve reluctantly withdraws into the hall. Louis sighs, almost smiling at the inevitability of his life. He turns back towards the bed.

LOUIS
(continuing)
What pain is that, Stevie?

The door SHUTS SOFTLY...

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- AFTERNOON

Louis and Eve walk back through town.

EVE
What was wrong with that lady?

LOUIS
Mrs. Hobbs? Well, some illnesses are hard to put a finger on.

They walk in silence for a moment, then...

EVE
Is she having a baby?

Louis pauses and looks at his daughter.

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CONTINUED:

LOUIS
No... Why you ask?

EVE
You ever want other kids?

LOUIS
Your mama and I are perfectly happy with the three kids we got.

EVE
I mean different kids. Besides us.

Louis stops abruptly. He kneels in front of her. He puts a hand on her forehead and pretends to feel for fever.

LOUIS
Stick out your tongue and say "ahhh."

Eve sticks her tongue out, enjoying this game.

LOUIS
(continuing)
No, I don't see anything in there would make you say something so stupid. Now come on, I'm going by the hospital. I've got to take you home.

EVE
Noooo! Please, Daddy!

LOUIS
Fraid so, kiddo. I'll race you. Give you a head start.

Eve can't resist the offer. She sprints off down the street.

HOLD ON LOUIS -- Concern darkens his face like a cloud.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- FRONT HALL -- NIGHT

Roselyn comes downstairs and hits a light switch. The hall falls dark, except for the insular glow of a table lamp. Roz's robe whispers as she crosses towards the lamp. She reaches to turn it off...

A HAND covers hers. LOUIS steps from the parlor into the small circle of light.

Roz pulls away from him and moves towards the stairs. He follows her, turning her towards him.

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CONTINUED:

LOUIS
People fantasize about their doctors, Roselyn... You know that--

She puts her hands to her ears.

ROZ
No.. don't talk...

Her body seems to collapse inward. She sways on her feet.

ROZ
(continuing)
I feel like I'm falling...

He pulls her towards him.

LOUIS
I'll catch you.

She SLAPS him hard across the face...

CLOSE -- With incredible tenderness, he traces the line of her cheek with his finger... He kisses her...

LONG ANGLE -- Gradually Roselyn relaxes in his arms. He kisses her hair. Their bodies fall back into shadows.

EXT. MARKETPLACE AND RIVER -- DAY

We can see heat waves rising from the ground. Despite the hot weather, the market is noisy and milling with people.

MOZELLE AND ROSELYN walk along the riverside. They are silent, lost in their own worlds. After a moment, Mozelle looks at Roz.

MOZELLE
We're supposed to be cheering each other up.

Roz looks up from her reverie.

ROZ
I know... I was just wondering what happened with that woman. I suppose he fixed it. He knows how to fix things.
(pause)
When I first met Louis, I watched him set a boy's leg that had fallen out of a tree. And I thought, here's a man that can fix things. He's a healer. He'll

(MORE) (CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

ROZ (cont'd)
take care of me. So I leave my family and move to this swamp, and I find out he's just a man.

MOZELLE
We're two of a kind, my brother and I. One day he'll turn around and see you for the first time. Then he'll stop looking for what he already has.

ROZ
What if it's too late?

Mozelle grabs her hand and smiles evasively.

MOZELLE
Let's eat pomegranates 'till our hands turn red and all we can think about is getting the juice off.

She leads Roz towards the market.

INT. MARKETPLACE -- DAY

LONG ANGLE -- Roz and Mozelle push through the crowd with a basket. Their spirits lift as they buy fruit.

ANGLE ON ELZORA -- the beautiful hag, sitting at her booth. She smokes a pipe and plays solitaire. Behind her is a classic voodoo alter complete with masks, icons and fetishes as well as candles, voodoo dolls, chicken feet and other crowd pleasing items. A sign above her head reads: AUTHENTIC FORTUNES TOLD! LET ELZORA READ YOUR FUTURE.

ELZORA'S POV -- Mozelle and Roz weave through the crowd.

Suddenly Mozelle turns and sees the old witch. THEIR EYES LOCK. Roz sees her also. She smiles with delight.

ROZ
Oh, Mo, let's get our fortunes told!

MOZELLE
Not by her.

ROZ
Oh, come on. You said you wanted to cheer me up.

ELZORA'S POV -- Roz pulls Mozelle towards her. They approach, arguing softly.

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE
Roz, that woman couldn't predict heat in August.

ROZ
Mozelle Batiste, If I didn't know you better, I'd say you had a case of professional jealousy!

Mozelle summons all the disdain she can manage.

MOZELLE
Roselyn, I'm a psychic counselor. Elzora's a sideshow attraction.

ROZ
Then there's nothing to be afraid of.

Roz steps up to Elzora's booth. Elzora continues playing cards as Roz enters.

ELZORA
Which one first?

Roz is suddenly nervous, but she approaches boldly.

ROZ
My sister-in-law is something of a sceptic. But I would very much like my fortune told.

With one hand, Elzora clears the table of cards.

ELZORA
Sit down.

Roz sits across from Elzora. Elzora hands her a small sack and gestures towards the table.

ELZORA
(continuing)
Empty it.

Roz shakes the sack and gasps as small animal bones fall onto the table. Elzora scrutinizes the pile of bones.

WE CUT BACK AND FORTH FROM ROZ TO ELZORA IN EXTREME CLOSE UP - -

ELZORA
You in pain, my daughter.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Roz is instantly spellbound. She nods almost imperceptibly.

ROZ
Yes.

ELZORA
There is an end to your problems. Thou' not one you imagine... Stay still and wait.

ROZ
Wait?

Elzora nods. There is a mischievousness in her eyes. Almost wicked--almost kind.

ELZORA
Sometime a soldier fall on his own sword. In three years time you be happy again. But first the pain.

ROZ
Three years...

ELZORA
Look to your children.

Elzora sits back and re-lights her pipe. She indicates a jar stuffed with bills.

ELZORA
(continuing)
Dollar.

ROZ
That's it? Wait three years and everything will be fine?

ELZORA
Look to your children.

Roz stands up with a bitter laugh. She can't believe she almost bought into this nonsense. She takes a dollar from her purse and shoves it in the jar.

ROZ
Thank you. I feel most enlightened. Good afternoon!

Roz crosses past Mozelle and starts to exit. Mozelle doesn't move.

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CONTINUED: (3)

ROZ
(continuing)
You were right. Let's go.

MOZELLE
Wait.

Mozelle crosses slowly to Elzora and puts a dollar in the jar. Elzora puts her pipe aside as Mozelle sits across from her. She pierces Mozelle with her eyes.

ELZORA
Some things are better left unsaid.

MOZELLE
I paid you a dollar, old woman. Now tell my fortune.

Elzora leans forward until their noses are almost touching. Mozelle meets her eyes levelly.

EXTREME CLOSE UP -- Elzora whispers.

ELZORA
I don't need monkey bones to tell your fortune, Mozelle Batiste. You're a curse. A black widder. Next man that marries you, is a dead man. Like the others. Always be that way.

Mozelle stands suddenly almost overturning the table.

MOZELLE
(screaming)
You're a LIAR--

She takes the jar of money and shatters it on the ground.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
You're a horrid old LYING WITCH!

IN THE CROWD heads turn to look.

EXT. MARKETPLACE AND STREET -- CONT.

Mozelle pushes through startled pedestrians, flinging tears from her eyes. Roz follows close behind.

ROZ
For Heaven's sake, what did she say?!

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE'S POV -- the place has become nightmarish. Faces are distorted.

Mozelle reaches the street and paces back and forth hugging herself with her arms. The world spins around her.

ROZ
(continuing)
I'm so sorry... It's all my fault.

MOZELLE
I'm alright. It's the heat--I just need to breathe for a second...

ANGLE ON A BUS -- approaching down the street.

MOZELLE'S POV OF BUS -- distorted in heat waves it becomes a black shadow rushing towards them. WE HEAR A ROAR OF SOUND AS THE SHADOW APPROACHES --

A SUCCESSION OF IMAGES -- A BEAM OF LIGHT PIERCES DARKNESS-- The roar ends in a sharp CRACK--A CHILDS BODY HITS THE GROUND--MOUTH OPEN, SCREAMING--A WAIL OF UNBEARABLE PAIN--

And then...

EXT. STREET -- SAME AS BEFORE

Everything is back to normal. The bus pulls to a noisy stop at the corner and opens its doors.

ANGLE ON MOZELLE -- She goes limp and begins to fall in SLOW MOTION. Roz rushes to catch her.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- WOODS AND BAYOU -- DAY

CLOSE ON -- A long water moccasin. It doesn't move.

EVE AND POE regard it with excitement. Eve pokes it with a stick. It still doesn't move.

EVE
It's dead.

POE
You sure?

EVE
It's not moving, is it?

POE
Maybe it's just sick.

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CONTINUED:

EVE
It's dead, you little chicken!

Eve reaches forward and grabs the snake just behind the head. IT SUDDENLY COMES TO LIFE, tongue darting forward!

Eve drops it with a scream. She falls backwards over Poe. They clamor to their feet and run, SCREAMING.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- SAME

Mozelle and Roz run into the yard panting with exertion. They've worked themselves into a panic.

Cisely is sitting in the oak tree, reading a book.

ROZ
Oh, Cisely--Thank Heavens! Where's Eve and Poe!

CISELY
I don't know.

We hear SCREAMING. They turn in the direction of the sound.

ROZ
Oh, My God--

LONG ANGLE -- Across the lawn between the bayou and the house, the children and the women run towards each other.

Eve and Poe run for their mother. Roselyn picks Poe up and clutches him to her bosom. They all talk at once as Roz and Mozelle shepherd the children toward the house.

They go in through the front door and Roz slams the door after her family.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- DINING ROOM -- DAY

It's Sunday. The family is finishing brunch. Louis pushes his plate away and addresses his wife.

LOUIS
You're telling me you want to keep the kids locked in the house because of something that old fortune teller told you?

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CONTINUED:

ROZ
She kept saying, "Look to your children," and no sooner do we leave than Mozelle has this vision of a child gettin' hit.

LOUIS
Roz, I love my sister, but she is not unfamiliar with the inside of a mental hospital--

ROZ
Louis! Not in front of the children...

LOUIS
They know!

CISELY
Of course we know.

POE
Know what?

CISELY
Aunt Mozelle's crazy.

EVE
She is not! She knows things! People trust her.

LOUIS
Darlin', your Aunt's... well, eccentric. The fortune telling's just something we let her do to keep busy, so she doesn't--

ROZ
Louis...

LOUIS
--get in trouble.

BEATRICE
She may be crazy, but them visions always come true.

ROZ
Anyway, I've made up my mind. They're stayin' in the house.

LOUIS
Until when?

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CONTINUED: (2)

ROZ
I don't know... Until Mozelle says it's safe.

LOUIS
I can't believe I'm hearing this!

Cisely brings her father the paper and his glasses. They exchange a look.

CISELY
(Patois)
What if we promise not to play in traffic.

ROZ
Don't you use that tone of voice with me, Cisely Batiste. And don't be speaking that trash to your father behind my back.

CISELY
You were looking right at us, Mama. Nothing ever happens behind your back.

BEATRICE
Don't you talk back to your mother, young lady. You're not too big to beat!

LOUIS
Don't threaten my daughter, Mama.

EVE
You let her threaten me!

Beatrice rises from the table, chair scraping the floor, noisily.

BEATRICE
When I was growing up, children didn't participate in the conversations of adults.
(to Louis)
You can let them kids back-talk and run wild if you want to. You won't hear a further word outta me. In my day we were thankful for signs and warnings.

She exits, mumbling.

BEATRICE
(continuing)
Go on and let the little hooligans get

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CONTINUED: (3)

BEATRICE (cont'd)
runned over. It will be quieter around here!

Everyone is silent for a moment.

ROZ
The woman tries my patience sometimes.

Louis stands and stretches.

LOUIS
Well, thanks for the delightful family chat, I gotta check on some patients.

ROZ
Louis, it's Sunday.

LOUIS
When you find a way to get sickness on a five day, eight hour schedule, you let me know.

ROZ
What's wrong with them that can't wait a day?

POE
Are you two gonna fight?

EVE
Some sickness is hard to put a finger on.

Louis eyes his youngest daughter.

LOUIS
I'll be back as soon as I can.

ROZ
Which patients you gotta see, Louis?

LOUIS
Aw, woman, go get your palm read and let me do my work!

He exits. Cisely follows him.

INT. FRONT HALL -- CONT.

Cisely gets her father's hat and medical bag and hands it to him. He hugs her tight.

LOUIS
You love your daddy, baby?

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

CISELY
You know I do.

LOUIS
That's all I need.

He kisses her and exits.

INT. DINING ROOM -- CONT.

Roz clears the table, angrily. Cisely enters and glares at her mother.

CISELY
Don't you think you're being a little immature?

ROZ
I beg your pardon?

CISELY
Keeping us in 'cause Aunt Mozelle's seeing things and not wanting Daddy to go to work. What's wrong with you?

Roz sets the plates down with a bang and grabs her daughter's face with her hand.

ROZ
If you're lucky, you might live long enough to one day have a husband and children of your own, but until then, this is my house and you will do what I say. Understand? I SAID, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

CISELY
Yes, ma'am.

ROZ
Good.

Roz releases her daughter and resumes clearing the table. The children watch her in shocked silence.

ROZ
(continuing)
No-one leaves this house 'till I say so.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- MORNING -- DAYS LATER

It's a gorgeous day.

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INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- UPPER VERANDA -- SAME

Cisely and Eve act out the balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet as they read from the play.

CISELY
"What man art thou, that thus bescreen'd in night, So stumblest on my counsel?"

EVE
"By a name I know not how to tell thee who I am..."

ANGLE ON POE -- He sits on the floor by the window, bouncing a ball off the wall.

THE BALL hits the wall, again and again.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- LATE NIGHT

Cisely sits in the darkened parlor, reading in the light of a single lamp. We hear the front door open quietly. Cisely jumps up. A moment later, Louis enters. Cisely greets him with a hug.

CISELY
It's late, Daddy.

LOUIS
So what are you doing up?

CISELY
Waiting for you, what you think I'm doing up.

She takes his coat and hangs it on a chair.

CISELY
What's your pleasure this evening, doctor?

LOUIS
Scotch and water, bartender.

She goes to a bar cabinet and makes him a drink. She takes a big sip.

LOUIS
(continuing)
Where's your Mama?

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CONTINUED:

CISELY
Everybody's asleep, Daddy. Mama was nervous, so Gran Mere gave her a tablet. For someone who don't believe in medicine, that woman's got every pill in the world.

LOUIS
Speaking of the aged and incontinent, I have to look in on Thomy. Maybe I'll take him out for a late stroll.. Or should I say--

LOUIS & CISELY
Roll!

Cisely giggles at the familiar joke.

CISELY
Roll him in the morning, Daddy. It's late.

LOUIS
Darlin' when you're that old, daytime and nighttime don't make much difference.

Cisely brings him his drink. She sits at his feet and rests her head on his knees.

CISELY
I never want to get that old.

LOUIS
You never want to get old *like that.* There's a difference. Growing old, in itself, is not such a bad thing. Beats the hell--

CISELY
(finishing for him)
Out of the alternatives.

LOUIS
Will you still love your daddy when he's old and blind? Peeing crooked, unable to hold his whiskey?

CISELY
If he can still dance.

LOUIS
Tough terms.

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INT. HALLWAY -- SAME

ANGLE ON EVE -- standing in the hall, listening. We hear their laughter from the parlor. Eve is sick with jealousy.

LOUIS (O.S.)
Then again, my daddy danced all the way to the grave. They were just about to lower him into the ground when they heard, ta tap, ta tap!

INT. PARLOR -- CONT.

LOUIS
Opened the casket and he was doin' a two-step. And deader than one of my sister's husbands.

CISELY
Daddy, I think you're drunk.

LOUIS
I've been drunker and delivered babies. And conceived babies much drunker.

CISELY
Daddy!

LOUIS
I ever tell you about the night we made Poe? I got in a fight with some knucklehead down at King's, came to under the pool table. Now, Roz was already sore at me about some little thing, hadn't spoken to me in about a week. I thought, damn, woman finds out I been drinking and fighting, she's gonna leave me. So I got Abernathy and Brantley to bring me home and tell her I'd been beat up by some Klanners from Baton Rougue--

CISELY
Daddy, that's terrible!

LOUIS
Let me finish the damn story, Cis. So they tell Roz and she sees me all messed up and she starts weeping and kissing me and kissing me and weeping, nine months later.. Poe.

Cisely takes his drink and sips it.

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CONTINUED:

CISELY
Do you still love her?

LOUIS
Darlin', let me tell you something. When I met your mama, men fought each other for the privilege of speaking her name. She was so pretty, it was painful to look at her. And she could dance almost as good as you.

CISELY
But not quite.

He stands and pulls Cisely to her feet. They dance slowly to imaginary music.

LOUIS
Not quite. But holding Roz Redding was like holding your favorite feather pillow. The one you just can't sleep without.

CISELY
And now?

LOUIS
Well, you know what happens with feather pillows. They get lumpy and deflated over the years...

Cisely giggles.

LOUIS
(continuing)
You have to fluff them up all the time just to make them...
(whispering in her ear)
interoceptive.

Cisely shrieks with laughter. Louis covers her mouth to quiet her as they continue to giggle helplessly.

LOUIS
(continuing)
Shhh...

ANGLE ON EVE -- standing in the doorway. She laughs uncertainly along with them.

ON LOUIS AND CISELY -- Their laughter fades as they notice her.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Eve give her father a big smile and crosses to him tentatively.

EVE
Hi, Daddy!

Louis lifts his daughter in the air.

LOUIS
Hey, look who's up! How's my little pumkinhead? Do you know what time it is?

He takes Cisely by the hand and hoists Eve on one hip.

LOUIS
(continuing)
It's time for both you gals to be in bed!

CISELY
No, Daddy!

LOUIS
Yes, it is. Your mama'd kill me if she found out I had you up. I'm just gonna finish my drink and check on old Thomy, then I'm heading to bed myself.

INT. FRONT HALL AND STAIR -- CONT.

LOUIS
Night, night owls.

EVE AND CISELY
Night, daddy.

Louis deposits his daughters by the stairs and sends them upstairs with a kiss. Cisely walks slightly ahead of Eve and doesn't look at her.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALL -- CONT.

As Cisely crosses to her room it's clear that she's furious. Eve follows behind her.

EVE
You wanna read with me?

Instead of answering, Cisely goes into her room and slams the door, leaving Eve alone in the hallway.

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INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- VOID

A CLOCK TICKS, endless units of time...

A FAUCET DRIPS, a monotonous echo...

INT. EVE'S ROOM -- MORNING

Eve stands by the window looking out. She is bored senseless.

She tiptoes to the bathroom that she shares with Cisely. The door is closed. She puts her ear to the door and listens.

INT. BATHROOM -- SAME

Cisely reclines in the bathtub so that the water is up to her chin. Her eyes are half closed.

INT. EVE'S ROOM -- CONT.

Eve tries to peek through the keyhole.

INT. BATHROOM -- SAME

ON DOOR -- the keyhole is blocked with a wad of chewing gum.

INT. EVE'S ROOM -- CONT.

Eve stares at the door in surprise. She rocks back on her heels, thinking. She looks towards...

A CIGAR BOX resting on a dresser.

INT. POE'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Poe is still asleep. The covers are tangled around his feet. He snores softly.

ON EVE -- standing in the doorway. She holds the cigar box in her hands. As she approaches the bed she takes something from the box. IT'S A STUFFED SNAKE SKIN convincingly lifelike. She places it gingerly on the sheet next to Poe's head.

Poe frowns and smacks his lips in his sleep.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- DAY

Roselyn and Gran Mere are making lunch. They work silently, the tension between them visible.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

Roz hums to herself as she slices potatoes with a sharp knife. She cuts her finger.

ROZ
Goddammit...

BEATRICE
Watch your mouth.

ON EVE -- standing in the doorway.

EVE
I heard you. You said "goddammit."

BEATRICE
Eve!

ROZ
You shouldn't be sneaking up on people when they're swearing to themselves.

EVE
Does it hurt?

ROZ
What?

EVE
(impatiently)
Your finger, Mother.

Roz wraps her finger in a towel.

ROZ
Oh, no... Not too much.

BEATRICE
You're gonna cut a finger off, one of these days.

EVE
"tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but 'tis enough, 'twill serve."
(she waits)
Romeo and Juliet.

ROZ
If you say so.

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CONTINUED: (2)

EVE
We've read most of the tragedies. We're starting on the goddamn comedies.

BEATRICE
You're askin' to git hit!

Upstairs we hear POE SCREAM followed by the LOUD SOUND of him hitting the floor. Eve permits herself a tiny smile. Beatrice crosses herself and hurries from the room. Roz sighs, wipes her hands and crosses to the door with Eve following.

EVE
We're going crazy in this house and you don't even care! What's wrong with you, anyway?

INT. HALL -- CONT.

Beatrice rushes to the stairway and heads up.

BEATRICE
(calling)
What happened, Baby? You okay?

FRONT DOOR -- MOZELLE lets herself in as Roz and Eve cross through. She is carrying a shopping bag stuffed with board games. We hear POE WAILING in fury upstairs.

MOZELLE
(cheerfully)
Hey, everybody!

ROZ
(kissing Mozelle)
Hey, Mo.
(calling upstairs)
Poe, are you alright?!

MOZELLE
Look what I found in the attic! A Monopoly board and Chinese checkers...

ROZ
You could find the Czar of Russia in your attic.

EVE
I despise Chinese checkers!

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CONTINUED:

POE
(From upstairs)
I hate her--I hate her! I wish she was dead!

MOZELLE
I feel like I walked into the middle of a cyclone.

ROZ
Eve, what did you do to your brother?

EVE
(shouting)
I'm gonna push him out a window, If I don't get out of this house!

ROZ
Eve...

EVE
Cisely's been in the goddamn bathtub for an hour, you know that?! She stayed in there three hours yesterday!

ROZ
Fortunately there's more than one bathroom in this house...

EVE
Ain't that much dirt in all Louisiana!
(calling upstairs)
Get out of the damn tub!!

ROZ
You watch your language, young lady!

EVE
(to Mozelle)
Mama keeps stabbing herself in the kitchen. Show her your hands, Mama!

ROZ
I think you better hush...

EVE
And where's Daddy? He's never home! He's supposed to be home sometimes!

Roz grabs her arm. Eve pulls away from her mother.

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CONTINUED: (2)

ROZ
Listen, you little ingrate, your father works hard so we can have a house with four bathrooms--

EVE
Not every night, he's not working! I know he's not!!

An icy silence follow this last outburst. Eve begins to suspect she's gone too far.

EVE
(continuing)
I mean...

MOZELLE
(to Eve)
Let me borrow you for a minute.

Mozelle grabs Eve's hand and drags her towards the parlor.

Roz sighs and looks at her battered hands. After a moment she starts upstairs.

ROZ
(calling)
Poe...

INT. PARLOR -- CONT.

Mozelle pulls the door closed behind them. She's furious.

MOZELLE
Is that your idea of being a good daughter?

EVE
It's true! He never comes home and it's makin' her nervous! She cuts herself.

MOZELLE
And you're just being helpful, bringin' it up, is that it?

EVE
She's nervous cuz he's messin' with other women--

Mozelle raises her hand--

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE
What did you say?

EVE
Nothin'.

MOZELLE
Play games with me. I swear, I'll slap you blind--

EVE
It's true! I saw them!

Mozelle drags the girl over to a couch and sits, abruptly.

MOZELLE
You saw who?

Eve is silent.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
You have five seconds--

EVE
Daddy and Matty Moreaux!

MOZELLE
Oh, God...

EVE
It was at the party. I was out in the carriage house and they didn't see me. And it was worse than just kissing, they were--

MOZELLE
Hush! Let me think a minute.

She reclines against the side of the couch and covers her face with her hands. After a moment she looks up.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
Have you told anyone?

EVE
(lying)
No.

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CONTINUED: (2)

MOZELLE
Well, that's good. Because if you tell anyone--anyone at all--I'm gonna kill you.

EVE
Yes, ma'am.

MOZELLE
And if you get careless again with your mama's feelings, I swear, I'll do you harm. You understand me?

EVE
Yes, ma'am.

Mozelle pulls Eve towards her and looks her in the eye.

MOZELLE
Listen to me... Your daddy loves you. And he loves your mother.

EVE
I know.

MOZELLE
(she sighs)
We're a lot the same, your father and I. 'Cept I don't have children to catch me... Y'all are my children.

For a long moment they don't speak. Mozelle pulls Eve towards her and rocks her as if she were a baby.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
That's why Maynard got tired of me, cause I'm barren. I prayed the Lord take all my gifts, everything that's special about me, but just let me give birth like any regular woman... But the Lord has seen fit to leave me as I am.

EVE
But Maynard loved you... Maynard loved you most of all.

MOZELLE
(almost whispering)
I think he did. But I didn't know that until I met Hosea.

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CONTINUED: (3)

EVE
Tell me about Hosea.

MOZELLE
He was a student of mine.

Eve looks at her aunt in astonishment.

EVE
A student!!

Mozelle throws her head back and laughs hard.

MOZELLE
My Lord, the look on your face.. I'm an adulteress, not a child molester! I taught adults!
(long pause, she sighs)
Oh, Eve... You're too young to understand, but when I was with Hosea, it was like my whole body was burning! I'd come home and have to rub ice on my face and neck to cool down. But if Maynard knew, he never said a word.
Then, one night, Hosea showed up at the door!

Mozelle gets up and reenacts the story almost feverishly. We hear SOUNDS FROM THE PAST as she speaks--faint VOICES overlap hers...

MOZELLE
He said, "Pack your bags, woman. I've come to take you with me!" And God help me... I pushed past my startled husband and I was going upstairs to pack my bags... When I heard Maynard say, in a tone I'd never heard him use, "I don't care who you are, sir, but if you do not leave my house at once, I will hurt you!"

She turns away from Eve towards a long mirror hanging on the wall.

IN THE MIRROR -- TWO MEN are in the room behind them. MAYNARD AND HOSEA glare at each other. Hosea aims a gun. Mozelle watches the reflection of her memories played out in the mirror as she continues. Their dialogue is a ghostly echo.

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CONTINUED: (4)

MOZELLE
And I turned just in time to see Hosea pull the gun out of his coat and aim it at Maynard!

MOZELLE & HOSEA
"I'm in love with your wife and if you try to stop us, I'll kill you!"

Maynard approaches Hosea, fearlessly.

MOZELLE
Maynard walked right up and pushed his chest in the barrel of that gun and he said...

MOZELLE & MAYNARD
"Then you'll have to kill me, because my wife ain't goin' nowhere."

ON MOZELLE -- She turns suddenly to face Eve. They are alone in the room.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
In that second, Eve, I knew I loved Maynard. He was so calm and brave and it was Hosea who was trembling! Maynard said...

IN THE MIRROR -- Maynard turns to look at Mozelle.

MOZELLE & MAYNARD
"Mozelle, tell this man you ain't going nowhere with him so he can get the hell out of my house!"

Beatrice appears behind the men.

MOZELLE
Mama was standing in the doorway of the kitchen, holding her heart like this...

Mozelle puts her hand over her heart. Beatrice covers hers, in an identical pose. Mozelle turns away and crosses behind EVE. Eve watches in the mirror as Mozelle goes to Maynard's side, becoming PART OF THE SCENE as she continues.

MOZELLE
I walked slowly over and stood next to my husband and I looked at my lover, this man who lit this great fire in me and I

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CONTINUED: (5)

MOZELLE (cont'd)
said, "Please leave our house. I never want to see you again." Hosea's eyes went another color and he stopped trembling.

Hosea looks at Mozelle, keeping the gun aimed at Maynard.

MOZELLE
He looked right at me and he said...

MOZELLE & HOSEA
"Alright, then..."

ON EVE -- She watches the scene in the mirror, wide-eyed as HOSEA PULLS THE TRIGGER.

EVE turns from the mirror with a gasp. Mozelle stands alone in the center of the room, tears in her eyes.

MOZELLE
And he shot Maynard in the chest. HE LOOKED RIGHT AT ME AS HE PULLED THE TRIGGER! Maynard fell to the floor.. like this...
(she collapses, slowly)
Hosea runs into the night and Mama's screaming, "You killed him! YOU KILLED MY SON!"

Eve crosses quickly to Mozelle. She drops to the floor next to her aunt and holds her, crying.

MOZELLE
I pushed my hands over the hole in his chest, blood pushing back at my fingers and I said, please don't die, Maynard... Please don't die...

EVE
(sobbing)
But he did...

MOZELLE
He did, baby.. He died looking at me....
(pause)
When Mama got out of the hospital, she moved in with y'all. Said she couldn't stand to be around me. She moved Thomy in here too and I was alone.. for a while...

As if on cue the Parlor door opens revealing...

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (6)

ROSELYN AND BEATRICE -- livid with rage. Beatrice holds the snake skin accusingly.

Mozelle and Eve look up from the floor with tear stained faces.

Roz enters and pulls Eve to her feet.

ROZ
Did you put that snake in Poe's bed?!!

EVE
It's dead, Mama--

Roz holds Eve with one hand and beats her repeatedly across the backside.

ROZ
Don't you EVER do that AGAIN!! You KNOW that boy's got a WEAK HEART!!

MOZELLE
Stop it, Roz!

Mozelle pulls Roz off Eve--but Beatrice takes over wailing on her.

BEATRICE
You got to learn to BEHAVE around here!! You could have SCARED HIM TO DEATH--

ROZ
Beatrice, stop beatin' my child!

Mozelle and Roz try to pull Beatrice off Eve.

BEATRICE
Let go a me!!

All four of them pull apart and glare angrily at each other. Without another word, Beatrice turns on her heel and exits.

Roz pushes her hair back into place and crosses to the door. At the doorway she turns.

ROZ
I'm sorry I hit you like that.

EVE
It's okay...

As Roz slides the doors closed...

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (7)

EVE
(continuing)
I know you been nervous.

Mozelle throws Eve a look.

MOZELLE
You put a dead snake in bed with Poe?

EVE
Uhuh.

MOZELLE
Why?

EVE
I guess I was trying to scare him to death.

Mozelle excepts this explanation silently. A long pause, then...

EVE
(continuing)
What happened next? After Maynard died and Gran Mere moved over here?

MOZELLE
You know what happened... I married your Uncle Harry...

ANGLE ON WINDOWS -- outside it's begun to rain. We...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PARLOR -- NIGHT

SAME ANGLE -- it's raining hard. The room is dark.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- DAY

Rain falling in sheets.

INT. MOZELLE'S HOUSE -- DAY

Mozelle sits in a corner of the living room, looking at shadows.

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EXT. MOZELLE'S PORCH -- SAME

LOW ANGLE -- Mud covered boots step into frame. Rain drips from the overcoat of an enormous man standing with his back to us. He carries a huge pallet in a leather case. He flicks his cigarette off the porch.

INT. MOZELLE'S -- SAME

Over the drumming of the rain, we can distinguish A KNOCK at the door. Mozelle looks up.

EXT. PORCH -- CONT.

OVER THE MAN'S SHOULDER -- Mozelle opens the door and stares at the drenched apparition before her.

MOZELLE
Can I help you?

THE MAN is half Native American and half black with a strong, lined face. He removes his hat, revealing long, silver hair.

MAN
Are you Mozelle Batiste?

MOZELLE
I am.

MAN
Am I disturbing you?

MOZELLE
I don't know yet.

MAN
My name is Julian Grayraven. Folks around here say you read the future.

Mozelle looks at him, unmoving.

INT. MOZELLE'S HOUSE -- MINUTES LATER

A COAT drips in the foyer. THE PALLET rest by the door.

Grayraven sits across from Mozelle. His sadness fills the room.

GRAYRAVEN
My wife left me a year ago. I've been through many cities searching for her. I have no home to return to anymore. I'm

(MORE) (CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

GRAYRAVEN (cont'd)
exhausted. I cannot continue and yet I cannot stop until I know. Where is my wife?

Mozelle extends her hands. He places his hands on hers. She closes her eyes --

A SUCCESSION OF IMAGES--A BEAUTIFUL INDIAN WOMAN SITS NAKED IN FRONT OF A MIRROR AS A WHITE MAN BRUSHES HER LONG HAIR--THEY MAKE LOVE TANGLED TOGETHER ON A BED WITH NO SHEETS--

Mozelle opens her eyes and looks at the man sitting across from her. She is filled with compassion for him, but there is something else... Something that makes her almost smile at the inevitability of her life.

INT. MOZELLE'S LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

RAIN pounds the windows.

GRAYRAVEN finishes stretching a canvas which he then places on an easel.

MOZELLE comes down the stairs in an off-the-shoulder, black lace dress. She smiles self-consciously at Grayraven. He positions her at the grand piano.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MOZELLE'S LIVING ROOM -- SOME TIME LATER

ANGLE ON EASEL -- A half completed portrait of Mozelle sitting at the piano. WE PAN across the room to find...

GRAYRAVEN AND MOZELLE -- necking passionately. She sits on the piano bench, he kneels on the floor in front of her. They look like they've been at it awhile.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- EVE'S ROOM -- AFTERNOON

A LARGE SPIDER weaves an intricate web. Raindrops lace the window behind it.

PULL BACK TO INCLUDE -- EVE inspecting the spider. She blows on it gently. The spider reacts, stretching and twitching.

Eve watches, enthralled, as it inches its way towards her face. Suddenly we hear...

ROZ (O.S.)
Eve...

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

Eve is standing on a stool by the window. She loses her balance and falls with a shriek.

ROZ AND POE stand at the bedroom door. Roz is clearly worried.

ROZ
Where's Cisely?!

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- LATE AFTERNOON

A flash of lightning in the distance and a faint rumble of thunder.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- FRONT HALL

Roz is on the phone, apoplectic with worry. Eve and Poe are trying to calm her down. Beatrice paces.

ROZ
(in telephone)
Officer, you don't understand. I'm afraid she might get hit by something...

Beatrice mutters to herself.

BEATRICE
Day like today, there's bound to be accidents...

ROZ
(to Beatrice)
Mama, please!
(into phone)
Would you just check--

FRONT DOOR -- Cisely enters, casually. She's wearing a slicker and rain hat and carrying an umbrella.

Roz hangs up the phone abruptly.

ROZ
(continuing)
Cisely!

She rushes to Cisely and almost collapses in her arms.

ROZ
(continuing)
Oh, thank God! Thank God!

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CONTINUED:

Roz pulls back from her daughter and shakes her, hysterically.

ROZ
(continuing)
What did you think you were doing, running off like that? I thought you'd been killed!

CISELY
Well, I wasn't.

BEATRICE
You almost gave your mother a stroke! You should be shamed!

ROZ
Where the hell did you go?!

CISELY
I went to visit Daddy... And then I went to the beauty parlor.

ROZ
You what?

Cisely calmly removes her hat. Her long hair has been cut shorter and curled. She looks beautiful and confident, no longer a little girl. She looks like her mother.

Everyone gasps. Beatrice clutches her breast. Eve and Poe back away from the fallout of their mother's inevitable rage. Poe closes his eyes.

Cisely faces her mother boldly. Neither of them move.

CISELY
I walked all the way to Daddy's office... And then I caught the bus to Opels'. I had to cross the train tracks to get home. And I'm alive, Mama. I didn't get hit by anything.

Roz SMACKS her daughter as hard as she can across the face!

Cisely fights to stay standing, but when she recovers her balance, she is dry-eyed and triumphant. She pushes past her mother.

Eve and Poe watch in amazement as she walks calmly upstairs.

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INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- TWILIGHT

Cisely sit on the bed looking out at the rain.

Eve enters. She's still in awe of her sister's boldness. She approaches cautiously and sits on the bed next to her. Cisely drapes an arm around her and they watch the rain in silence.

INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- NIGHT

It's still raining. The rumble of thunder is closer.

The only light comes from a small lamp which is reflected in a mirror. Cisely enters from the bathroom wrapped in a towel. She drops the towel and stands naked in front of the mirror.

INT. LOWER HALLWAY AND STAIR -- NIGHT

Cisely buttons a bathrobe over her nightgown as she tiptoes down the stairs.

INT. PARLOR -- CONT.

Cisely slides the doors open and turns on a light revealing...

ROSELYN -- sitting in a chair by the window.

THOMY sits in his wheelchair by a window across the room.

Cisely is clearly taken aback.

CISELY
Why're you sitting in the dark, Mama?

ROZ
It makes the rain look silver.
(pause)
Come here, Cisely.

Cisely crosses to her mother, but stands a little away. Roz makes no move to touch her.

ROZ
(continuing)
You're trying to show me that you're growing up. You're trying to show me you're independent, but you're my child and I worry about you. I had the police on the phone when you walked in.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

CISELY
I'm sorry you were worried, but I'm not sorry I went out.

Thomy has turned in his chair to watch them.

ROZ
When I was your age, I was just like you. I thought I knew everything. Now, even the things I'm most familiar with seem mysterious to me. But I know I love you... And it's my job to protect you, as best I can. If you disobey my orders and leave this house again, I swear, I'll lock you in your room. Do you hear me?

CISELY
Yes, ma'am.

ROZ
Go back to bed. I'm going to wait up for your father tonight. I don't want you waiting up for him anymore.

CISELY
But, Mama...

ROZ
I'll say it one more time, Cisely. I know you love your daddy, and your daddy loves you, but I don't want you waiting up for him anymore.

Cisely starts to go but Roz stops her.

ROZ
(continuing)
Cisely... Did you hear me?

Cisely looks at the floor, her face burning.

CISELY
Yes, Ma'am.

She turns and runs for the door. In the doorway she turns.

CISELY
(continuing)
But you don't understand him. And you're going to drive him away from us. I'll never forgive you if you drive him away!

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (2)

Cisely exits. Roz watches her go. After a moment she turns off the light, leaving herself and Thomy in darkness.

INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- CONT.

Cisely storms into the room in tears. She paces back and forth in frustration. Finally, she throws herself on the bed and covers her head with a pillow.

INT. EVE'S ROOM -- LATER

Eve lies awake in bed. We hear muffled VOICES RAISED IN ANGER coming from downstairs.

INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- SAME

Cisely lies in bed. Tears run down her face as she listens to her parents argue.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- LATE NIGHT

A thunderstorm is raging. Lightning bolts bisect the sky. The cracks of thunder are deafening.

A shutter bangs in the wind. The porch swing sways wildly.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- EVE'S ROOM -- SAME

Eve is under the covers with a pillow over her head. A CLAP OF THUNDER like a gunshot wakes her. Eve runs to Cisely's door and throws herself against it. It's locked. She pounds on it.

EVE
Cisely, let me in! I'm scared! Cisely!

She waits, but there is no answer.

INT. EVE & CISELY'S BATHROOM -- CONT.

A window is open. Eve enters and closes it. As she turns back to her room, something catches her eye...

EVE'S POV -- A pair of panties stained with blood are crumpled in the wastebasket.

INT. EVE'S ROOM -- CONT.

Eve dives under the blankets and once again covers her head with the pillow.

DISSOLVE TO:

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EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- MORNING

It is beautiful and clear. Silver leaves drip in the sun. A fine pink tinged mist is everywhere. There is a rainbow over the bayou.

EXT. MOZELLE'S PORCH -- SAME

Grayraven sits on the porch, idly sketching. Mozelle comes from the house with coffee and sits beside him.

MOZELLE
Isn't it beautiful.

GRAYRAVEN
You're beautiful.

MOZELLE
When it rains like that for so long, it starts to feel like it's always been raining. Like sunshine was just a dream I had when I was a child.

GRAYRAVEN
Mozelle, now that the weather has broken, I must go. I have to find my wife.

Mozelle fights to keep her composure.

MOZELLE
Mr. Grayraven, I told you she's not coming back. She's fallen in love.

GRAYRAVEN
I have to find my wife so that I can divorce her, and marry you.

MOZELLE
Oh, Julian... It's enough that you're here with me. You've made me so happy... But you can't possibly marry me. I can't let that happen.

GRAYRAVEN
Because I'm half Indian?

MOZELLE
Oh God no! It's not that.. It's... Bear with me...

Mozelle tries to phrase the words she's never spoken before.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE
(continuing)
I'm cursed...

She loses heart and sighs.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
I can't have children. I'm barren.

GRAYRAVEN
You're not barren, you're wounded.. here...
(he touches her heart)
It's here that I will plant seeds.

Suddenly marriage seems like a detail that can be ironed out later. He bends over her to kiss her. As their lips touch, WE HEAR--

THE PIERCING SQUEAL OF BRAKES AND PEOPLE SCREAMING--

Mozelle and Grayraven turn in the direction of the noise.

DOWN THE STREET -- A BUS has jackknifed to a stop in the middle of the intersection and a crowd is gathering around it.

Mozelle runs to the corner in a panic. Grayraven follows her.

THE CROWD now includes the bus driver and passengers as well as pedestrians. Everyone talks at once. The bus driver is trying to explain what happened to anyone who will listen.

BUS DRIVER
...came out of nowhere. He just ran right in front of me!

Mozelle pushes to the front of the crowd. Grayraven tries to hold her back but she pulls away from him.

MOZELLE
Let me go! Excuse me... Let me through!

A BOY is lying on the ground, his broken body twisted awkwardly. We do not see his face.

ON MOZELLE -- she pushes to the front of the crowd. As she looks at the boy, her relief is so palpable that people turn and stare. She lets out a sound which is almost laughter.

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INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- KITCHEN -- DAY

Eve and Poe shout with joy. They jump up and down, hugging each other, Roz and Mozelle. Grayraven stands apart from the others, obviously confused. Beatrice also watches with disapproval.

EVE AND POE
We're free! We're free!!

ROZ
Tonight we'll barbecue outside and have a picnic!

BEATRICE
It's not right to be celebratin' and carryin' on when someone's child is dead.

ROZ
Oh, Mama, they've been in the house for weeks!

Poe runs out the door and jumps up and down on the lawn. Eve is about to follow him when Roz stops her.

ROZ
(continuing)
Eve, run upstairs and tell your sister. She hasn't come down all morning.
(quiet)
I think she's still mad at me.

Eve runs out of the kitchen.

EVE
(calling)
Cisely!

BEATRICE
It ain't right.

ROZ
(to Mozelle)
Whose child was it, anyway?

MOZELLE
Dicky Harris' boy.

ROZ
Little Kyle?

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INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- CONT.

The shutters are closed.

Cisely lies in bed facing the wall. She doesn't move as Eve enters.

EVE
Cisely! Cisely, wake up! We're free! We can go outside!

CISELY
Go away.

Eve jumps on the bed and shakes her sister.

EVE
Cisely! Some other kid got hit! We can go outside. Cisely!

Cisely turns to face Eve. She a wreck. Her eyes are almost swollen shut from crying and there's a welt coming up on the side of her face. She pushes Eve from the bed as hard as she can. Eve hits the floor.

CISELY
Go away!!

EVE
What the hell is wrong with you?! You think just 'cuz you got blood in your pants you don't have to act civilized no more!? It's just means you're old, it don't mean you're crazy!!

CISELY
Shut up!!

EVE
Cisely's got her period! I'm gonna tell Daddy!!

Cisely leaps from the bed, kicking off the covers. But Eve is instantly on her feet--

INT. FRONT HALL AND STAIRS -- CONT.

Eve goes flying down the stairs. Cisely's nightgown rips as she chases her. They run through the astonished adults.

EVE
Mama, help! Cisely's trying to kill me!

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

Cisely chases Eve out the front door. The adults follow.

EXT. BAPTIST HOUSE -- CONT.

Eve and Cisely run past Poe onto the lawn. Cisely does a flying leap and lands on Eve. The two girls go down in a heap. Eve screams as Cisely hits her repeatedly. Roz and Mozelle try to pull Cisely off Eve, but Cisely fights back, hitting them as hard as she can. Grayraven intervenes and gently restrains Cisely. She is hysterical. Her face is mottled red. Everyone watches, frightened, as she struggles against Grayraven.

INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- LATER

Cisely looks as if she's finally exhausted herself. Mozelle holds her in her arms and strokes her hair. Roz sits next to her on the bed. They are obviously worried.

Eve sticks her head in the door.

EVE
Daddy's home.

INT. UPPER HALL AND STAIR -- CONT.

Louis runs up the stairs, alarmed. Roz meets him outside Cisely's door. Eve hangs back, listening.

ROZ
I don't know what happened. It's like she went crazy. We thought she was having a seizure or something. We were so scared.
(pause)
Is it my fault, you think? Because I hit her?

LOUIS
No, Roz. I don't think it's your fault. Let me take a look at her.

ROZ
I try so hard to be close to her. But I can't get in. It's like there's a wall between us...

LOUIS
Let me see her.

Louis starts to move past her but she stops him.

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CONTINUED:

ROZ
Louis... She started her period, did you know that?

He shakes his head.

ROZ
(continuing)
She didn't even tell me.

INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- CONT.

Louis enters. Cisely turns and faces the wall.

CISELY
Go away, Daddy! I don't want you here!

LOUIS
I just want to take your pulse, check your temperature. Baby doctor stuff.

CISELY
No! I don't want you looking at me!!

The words go through Louis like a knife. He glances quickly at his sister.

LOUIS
Alright, baby. I know a nice woman doctor we can take you to. Dr. Reed. Would that be better?

Cisely buries her face in Mozelle's lap and doesn't respond.

EXT. UPPER VERANDA -- DAY

Cisely sits curled on the swing, arms around her knees, withdrawn. LAUGHTER floats to us from below...

EXT. FRONT YARD -- SAME

Poe chases Eve around the pond. They are vibrant with mischief, reveling in their freedom.

POE
I'll kill you!!

Eve shrieks towards the house.

EVE
CISELY!

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EXT. VERANDA -- SAME

ON CISELY -- Silent and unresponsive. She is lost in her own world. Unreachable.

INT. LOUIS AND ROZ'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Louis sits on the edge of the bed. Roz paces in her night dress. They speak in lowered voices.

ROZ
She blames me for not making you happier... She thinks I'm driving you away...

She gives a harsh, ironic laugh.

LOUIS
It's not you, Roz...

ROZ
She won't even look at me.

LOUIS
She'll be alright. We have to give it time.

ROZ
How much time, Louis? It's been two weeks! She won't eat, she won't speak... It's like she's sleepwalking.

Louis runs his hands through his hair.

LOUIS
What do you want me to do?

ROZ
Dr. Reed thinks we should take her to a shrink...

The color drains from Louis' face. Roz starts to cry.

ROZ
(continuing)
She won't even look at me, Louis...

After a long moment, Louis sighs. He pulls her towards him and holds her gently.

LOUIS
Okay... okay.

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INT. BATISTE SALON -- DAY

Cisely sits on the couch. Roz sits in a chair facing her. Louis stands by the window looking out. Cisely does not look at her parents.

Louis turns to face his daughter. He is drained and exhausted.

LOUIS
This psychologist fellow thought you might like.. kind of a vacation from us. But he doesn't know you that well, does he? He doesn't know how close you are to Eve and Poe... and all of us.

ROZ
(fighting tears)
It was just a suggestion. We'd never send you away, unless you wanted to go.

Louis crosses to the couch and kneels on the floor in front of his daughter. He speaks to her softly, almost whispering.

LOUIS
Whatever you're feeling, we can work it out together, Cis. In time, everything will be alright again, I promise you....

CISELY
(almost inaudible)
I want to go.

Louis just stares at his daughter.

ROZ
What did you say, baby?

CISELY
I said, I want to go.

There is silence in the room.

ROZ
Well then, it's all settled. I've already talked to your grandmother... She can't wait to see you.

INT. FRONT HALL AND STAIR -- SAME

Eve has been listening by the salon door. She is devastated.

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INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Louis and Roz lie side by side in the dark. They are lost in separate thoughts. They don't touch or speak.

INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- SAME

Cisely sits in an armchair by the window, looking out. Eve is on her knees in front of her. Her head is in Cisely's lap. She is sobbing.

EVE
If you leave me alone with them I'll die! I'll die, Cisely!!

Cisely strokes her sister's head as she looks out the window.

EVE
(continuing)
What's wrong with you?! Why won't you tell me? Is it me? Is it something I did? Whatever it is, I won't ever do it again! I promise! Why won't you talk to me?!

Cisely speaks in a whisper.

CISELY
Of course it's not you, Rabbit. You're my only friend.

The sound of Cisely's voice makes Eve stop crying. She is instantly attentive.

EVE
Then what is it, Cisely? Tell me. I promise I won't tell anybody!

Cisely holds out her arms and Eve crawls into the chair next to her. Cisely speaks very softly.

CISELY
Remember the storm?

EVE
The day you cut your hair and Mama hit you.

CISELY
Did you hear Mama and Daddy fighting that night?

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CONTINUED:

EVE
Yes.

CISELY
Part of it was about me, how he let me visit him that day... The other thing they were fighting about was Matty Moreaux.

EVE
Mama knows about Daddy and Matty?

CISELY
Everybody knows. She been hanging around Daddy's office. Right in front of everyone.

EVE
You believe me now? About what happened at the party?

CISELY
I believed you then.

Eve looks at her sister with wide eyes. Cisely continues.

CISELY
(continuing)
But Mama doesn't understand Daddy. He's not like regular men. He's not the kind of man who can just come home every night at five. It would be wrong to make him do that. Like caging a lion.
(pause)
Anyway, I waited that night. I waited until I heard Mama come upstairs.

There is a CRACK OF THUNDER--and we are in a FLASHBACK--

INT. UPPER HALL -- FLASHBACK

Roz comes up the stairs, crying softly. As she walks out of frame we notice...

CISELY peeking from behind her door. As soon as she hears her mother's door close, she tiptoes downstairs.

CISELY (V.O.)
I went downstairs to make sure he was okay... I was afraid of what she might have said. I was afraid he would divorce us.

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INT. PARLOR -- FLASHBACK

Louis sits in the dark with his head in his hands. LIGHTNING periodically illuminates the room. Cisely enters. She doesn't say anything. She crosses to the bar, pours her father a drink and brings it to him. He looks up at her gratefully and kisses her hand. She moves behind him and massages his shoulders. They speak in low voices but we can't hear what they're saying over the ROAR of THUNDER. Louis grabs Cisely's hand and pulls her around to his lap.

THOMY sits by the window, watching.

CISELY (V.O.)
He was so sad. I sat on his lap and I saw a tear on his face and I was scared. I wanted to make him feel better.

CLOSE ON -- Louis and Cisely. She brushes a tear from his face. He cradles her face in his hand and kisses her, sweetly. And then the inevitable happens--HE KISSES HER AGAIN, PASSIONATELY--FOR A MOMENT SHE RELAXES IN HIS ARMS AND THEN SHE BEGINS TO FIGHT! HE PULLS HER HEAD BACK, TURNING SO THAT HE ALMOST COVERS HER. ONE HAND REACHES UNDER HER NIGHTGOWN. CISELY FIGHTS, BUT HE PRESSES DOWN ON HER, PINNING HER TO THE CHAIR.

CISELY
I was trying to get away and he was holding me and kissing me... And finally I pushed him away with my knee and I must have hurt him because he hit me!

SOMEHOW SHE GETS HER KNEE BETWEEN THEM AND DRIVES IT INTO HIS STOMACH. HE PULLS BACK AND HITS HER ACROSS THE FACE KNOCKING HER TO THE FLOOR--

CISELY
He's never hit me.

Thomy let's out a MOAN and flails in his chair--

And Louis is instantly ashamed. He looks tortured. He stands over her, saying something we can't hear. He offers her his hand but she doesn't take it. She picks herself up off the floor and runs from the room.

A FLASH OF LIGHTNING ENDS FLASHBACK --

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INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- AS BEFORE

Cisely and Eve are both crying. Cisely tries to finish the story.

CISELY
And I ran...

Eve looks at her sister. Her eyes are wild.

EVE
I'll kill him! I swear it, Cisely. I'll kill him for hurting you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CISELY'S ROOM -- DAWN

Both girls are in Cisely's bed. Eve is asleep in Cisely's arms. Cisely stares out the windows into the growing light.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- DAY

CLOSE ON EVE -- She sits on the front steps, her face swollen and tear stained. We see movement around her and hear voices, but we stay on her.

ROZ (O.S.)
I'll be back in a week or so. I just want to get her settled in.

MOZELLE (O.S.)
Don't worry about a thing.

Roz crosses to Eve and kneels into frame.

ROZ
Be a big girl and stop pouting. You don't want your sister to feel bad, do you?

Eve wipes her face and stands. Everyone is gathered in front of the house. Grayraven and Louis carry luggage to the car. Roz hugs Eve.

ROZ
(continuing)
There's my big girl. Take care of Poe and Daddy. And try to be good.

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CONTINUED:

ON CISELY -- dressed in a pretty traveling suit. She carries a small bag. She's more cheerful than we've seen her recently. She crosses to Eve.

EVE AND CISELY embrace each other for a long moment.

CISELY
Don't cry, Rabbit. I love you.

EVE
I love you too. More than anybody!

As the sisters pull apart. Louis approaches.

LOUIS
Come on, baby-doll. Don't want to miss the train.
(to Eve)
I'm just going to drop them off and I'll be back before dinner, okay, Pumpkin?

Mozelle crosses to Eve and takes her hand. They watch as Louis places his hand on Cisely's head and leads her to the car. In a subtle but distinct gesture, Cisely pulls away from him. At the car, Cisely turns to look at her sister. In SLOW MOTION she half raises a finger to her lips.

ON MOZELLE -- taking this in.

THOMY sits in his wheelchair on the porch, watching also. His face is slack. Complex emotions show in his eyes. We hear the CAR DOORS CLOSE.

INT. BATISTE DINING ROOM -- EVENING

LOUIS' PLACE SETTING is untouched.

Grayraven is clearing dishes and Beatrice is serving Poe some pie.

EXT. VERANDA -- EVENING

It is not quite dark. Eve stands alone looking out. Mozelle steps onto the veranda. Eve doesn't turn.

MOZELLE
Maybe he ran into traffic.

EVE
It's Sunday.

Mozelle leans on the railing next to Eve.

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CONTINUED:

MOZELLE
He'll be back. And so will Cisely. I know she will.
(she sighs)
Life is filled with good-byes, Eve... A million good-byes. And it hurts every time..

Mozelle looks out over the forest and bayou.

MOZELLE'S POV -- THREE MEN emerge from the darkness and walk slowly towards the house. THE GHOSTS OF MOZELLE'S HUSBANDS walk in languid synchronicity. They glide across the pond, leaving the water undisturbed.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
Sometimes I feel like I've lost so much, I have to find new things to lose. And all I know is, there must be a divine point to all of it and it's just over my head. That when we die it will all come clear, and we'll say, "so that was the damn point!" And then sometimes I think there's no point at all... and that's the point.
(she sighs again)
All I know is, most people's lives are a great disappointment to them.. and no-one leaves this earth without feeling terrible pain. And if there's no Divine Explanation at the end of it all, well then that's... sad.

The woman and the child look out into the night, lost in their own thoughts. There is a long silence.

EVE
How do you kill someone with voodoo?

MOZELLE
Oh! I almost forgot you were there.

EVE
I mean, do you just wish real hard they were dead, or do you have to do something special?

MOZELLE
I suppose you put some of their hair on a doll and stick pins in it or something, I really don't know.

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CONTINUED: (2)

MOZELLE (cont'd)
(and then)
What makes you ask a thing like that?

EVE
Nothing...

MOZELLE
You must have been thinking something, right before you were thinking that. What led you to that particular thought?

EVE
I don't know..

Eve has Mozelle's full attention now. Mozelle moves towards Eve and looks her in the eyes.

MOZELLE
Is there someone around here that you're angry with? Someone you want dead?

EVE
I'm going inside.

MOZELLE
I think you better tell me what's on your mind.
(she waits)
You got five seconds.

Eve looks out over the bayou and doesn't speak. Mozelle extends her hands.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
Give me your hands.

Mozelle waits. Eve looks at her aunt without moving.

MOZELLE
(continuing)
Give them to me.

EVE
I don't have to.

Mozelle doesn't move. She holds Eve with her eyes. Slowly Eve extends her hands and holds them above Mozelle's defiantly. Something in Eve's eyes is frightening.

CLOSE -- Eve lays her palms on Mozelle's palms...

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CONTINUED: (3)

As their hands touch, Mozelle flinches and pulls away. Her hands flutter to her face, awkwardly. She straightens her hair.

MOZELLE
Well, never mind. If you want to keep secrets, go ahead. I won't squeeze it out of you. But you can't kill people with voodoo. That's ridiculous.

Eve is clearly disappointed in her aunt. She looks at her coldly, then goes inside.

Mozelle stares after her. She is trembling.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- FRONT HALL AND STAIR -- LATE NIGHT

The house is dark and quiet. After a moment the front door opens and Louis enters. He crosses to the Parlor. We hear him pouring himself a drink.

ON EVE -- She sits on the stairs in the dark. She quietly gets up and tiptoes upstairs.

EXT. VERANDA AND YARD -- LATE NIGHT

Louis steps out onto the veranda. He rests his drink on the railing and puts his face in his hands. He massages his temples and rubs his eyes, sighing deeply. He steps off the porch and into the yard. He stands looking out and the water.

EXT. UPPER VERANDA -- SAME

Eve stands at the railing, looking down. She watches her father.

INT. EVE'S ROOM -- DAY

CLOSE ON CIGAR BOX -- the lid opens revealing... snakeskins, cicada shells, butterfly wings, a rabbit's foot, a sack of coins and other treasures.

ON EVE -- She removes the sack and empties it onto the floor in front of her. She counts the small pile of change, including the silver dollar Harry gave her. It's not much.

INT. UPPER HALL AND STAIR -- DAY

Eve listens to make sure the coast is clear--and then crosses to her parents room.

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INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- CONT.

Eve enters. Louis' clothes are strewn about. A pair of his trousers are hanging across a chair. She searches the pockets.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM -- DAY

Like the bedroom, the bathroom has become messy in Roselyn's absence.

Eve opens a bag of her father's toiletries. She picks up a comb.

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- DAY

Eve walks through town. Heat waves rise from the streets. The town is subdued. The few pedestrians move slowly.

EXT. MARKET PLACE -- DAY

The market is half empty. Vendors fan themselves behind their wares. Eve walks through, looking for something.

CLOSE ON EVE -- She pauses, frowning. Someone we don't see puts a hand on her shoulder. She turns with a gasp.

It's LENNY, Matty's husband.

LENNY
How you doing, Red? Didn't mean to scare you.

EVE
Hi, Mr. Martin.

LENNY
How's the family?

EVE
Everybody's fine. How's Matty?

LENNY
Same as always. Salty and sweet. What you lookin' for?

EVE
Uh.. Apples.

Lenny laughs and points a little behind them.

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CONTINUED:

LENNY
Well you just walked right past them!

EVE
Oh... Thanks.

She turns and walks back towards the apples. She pretends to examine them. She sneaks a look to find Martin still watching her, amused. She has a thought.

EVE
(continuing)
Mr. Moreaux? You still teaching?

LENNY
Yeah, darlin'! I'm at Tulane, down in New Orleans. Been there for years.

EVE
That's a long drive.

LENNY
Well, I stay on campus if I'm not feeling up to it. But I usually try to make it home so Matty don't get too lonely.

EVE
Matty don't seem like the lonely type.

LENNY
I guess not.

EVE
You must get home real late, when you get home.

Lenny cocks his head and looks at her with narrowed eyes.

LENNY
Sometimes.

EVE
So does Daddy. Every night. My Mama gets real lonely. But then, she's the lonely type. Not like Daddy and Matty.
(pause)
Well, see you later.

She leaves the apple stand and walks past him.

ON LENNY -- He watches Eve, motionless, as she walks away. He looks as if he's been hit with a brick.

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EXT. MARKET PLACE -- CONT.

Eve continues along to the end of the market. She is frustrated, unable to find what she's looking for. Then she sees...

A WOMAN IN A STRAW HAT stooped over in front of a vegetable stand, testing the firmness of squash.

Eve approaches her and clears her throat. The woman ignores her.

EVE
Excuse me...

The woman turns... ELZORA is dressed like any other shopper on a hot day. She carries a basket of vegetables and herbs.

ELZORA
(Patois)
Bad girl. I remember you.
(English)
Pineapple thief.

Eve is suddenly frightened.

EVE
Um... Hi,
(Patois)
I been looking for you.

ELZORA
(Patois)
Only people ever look for me got good reason.

EVE
(Patois)
I have a good reason.

ELZORA
You got money?

EVE
Twenty dollars.

ELZORA
Twenty!? Let me see.

Eve pulls a twenty dollar bill from her pocket and Elzora snatches it.

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CONTINUED:

ELZORA
(continuing)
You steal this from your daddy?

EVE
Why you think I stole it?

ELZORA
You didn't git it layin' bricks.
(she chuckles)
Follow me.

Eve follows Elzora out of the market and into the hot streets.

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- RAILROAD TRACKS

The tracks cross over the bayou.

LONG ANGLE -- Eve and Elzora cross the tracks at the edge of the bridge.

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- FISHING CAMP -- DAY

We're on a side of town we've never seen before. Elzora and Eve cross a bridge and walk along a row of tin shacks perched at the edge of the water. Elzora walks rapidly as if oblivious to the heat. Eve follows a few steps behind her.

EVE
Where we going?

ELZORA
My office.
(she chuckles)
You eat oxtail stew? Should be almost ready.

EXT. ELZORA'S COTTAGE -- DAY

The bayou opens onto the river. A tiny shack is suspended from cypress trees hanging over the water. Wooden piers lead out to it.

INT. ELZORA'S COTTAGE -- SAME

The house is tidy and strangely hospitable. There are more plants than furniture. They grow in abundance, covering the windows like drapes. Candles light the room.

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CONTINUED:

Eve sits on pillows on the wood floor. She takes a tentative taste of soup. Elzora sits across from her, watching her over her bowl.

ELZORA
You related to Mozelle Batiste?

EVE
I'm her niece.

ELZORA
She who you want dead?

EVE
No. Someone else.

ELZORA
Too bad.
(Patois)
Why you want this person dead?

EVE
(Patois)
Private reasons.

ELZORA
(Patois)
This person harmed you?

EVE
(Patois)
Others in my family.

ELZORA
(Patois)
I give you something to protect your family from this person.

EVE
(English)
I want him dead.

ELZORA
You certain for sure?

EVE
Yes, ma'am.

ELZORA
People have a way of dying at their own speed. But I'll see what I can do. I
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (2)

ELZORA (cont'd)
need some hair from the head of this person.

EVE
I brought you some. Off a comb. I hope it's enough.

Eve reaches into her pocket and pulls a wad of tissue. She opens it revealing a few wavy strands of hair. Elzora stares at them for a moment and then breaks into peals of laughter.

ELZORA
Alright, alright. Don't be too eager. Come back Thursday night. We'll see.

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- VOID

A clock ticks. A spider weaves a web...

INT. EVE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Eve lies on her stomach on the floor, her cigar box open in front of her.

CLOSE -- She holds a SNAKE SKIN in one hand. In the other she holds a pin. With great deliberation, she jabs the pin into the belly of the snake.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- THURSDAY NIGHT

A few lights are on but the house is mostly dark. Eve slips out the front door and heads down the street.

EXT. BAYOU AND BRIDGE -- NIGHT

Eerie and quiet in the moonlight. Eve tries to master her fear as she crosses the bridge to Elzora's.

EXT. ELZORA'S COTTAGE -- NIGHT

The cottage is totally dark. Eve is breathless as she approaches. She knocks on the door. There is no answer. She knocks again, harder. Finally she pounds on the door and it swings open--

Elzora has been sleeping and she's a terrifying sight. Her white hair is wild around her face. She's furious at having been awakened.

ELZORA
Get the hell off my property or I'll cook you and eat you!

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CONTINUED:

Eve stumbles backwards and falls. Elzora slowly recognizes her.

ELZORA
(continuing)
That you, Pineapple Thief?

She opens the door and allows Eve to enter.

INT. ELZORA'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Elzora moves around the room lighting candles.

I thought you was one of them town kids, always bothering me. Is he dead yet?

EVE
How could he be dead? You didn't give me the doll.

ELZORA
What doll? I didn't say nothin' 'bout no doll.

EVE
The.. the voodoo doll.

Elzora throws her head back and cackles.

ELZORA
I didn't make you no voodoo doll! I made a wax coffin, put the hair in the mouth of a snake, buried in the graveyard. He should be dead by now.

Eve can barely breathe or speak.

EVE
I thought I had to do something first! Like.. like stick pins in it or...

ELZORA
You did do something. You brought me his hair and you paid me twenty dollars.

EVE
But I wanted it.. I wanted to have it.. I need it... Oh, God.. Where.. where'd you bury it?

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CONTINUED:

ELZORA
Down there where all them Batistes is buried. But I don't think you'll find it. You said you wanted him dead. You said you was certain.

Without another word, Eve turns and runs. Elzora shakes her head and laughs.

EXT. ELZORA'S COTTAGE -- CONT.

Eve burst through the door and runs down the slated pier that leads to dry land.

Elzora stands in the doorway, laughing.

EXT. FISHING CAMP -- NIGHT

The moon is lightly veiled in fog. In the distance we see Eve running towards us.

She is nearly hysterical. Tears run down her cheeks.

ELZORA'S LAUGHTER echoes in the night.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS -- NIGHT

Eve is a tiny figure running alongside the railroad tracks. On the other side of the tracks is an older, seedier part of town. She crosses the tracks and run towards an old brick building with a neon sign that says, KING'S BAR.

INT. KING'S BAR -- SAME

In contrast to the deserted streets, the bar is packed. The walls are papered with dollar bills which have been there for years. A sign over the bar reads, SERVING THE THIRSTY SINCE 1839. In the front there are dark booths of ancient leather. In the back there's a game room with pool tables.

EVE enters and peers through the smoke. Several heads turn to look as the child moves through the crowd.

A waitress with a tray crosses from the bar revealing--

LOUIS AND MATTY -- He's standing, she's sitting. She has her legs wrapped around his. They are laughing. He feeds her an olive from his martini.

Eve runs up to her father. She pushes between him and Matty and wraps her arms around him.

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CONTINUED:

EVE
Daddy!! I'm so glad to see you!

LOUIS
What on earth are you two doing way over here at this hour? What's wrong? Is it Gran Mere?

He looks into her anxious face with concern. Eve is weak with relief.

EVE
Daddy, please come home with me! Please! I want you to come home! Please!

Louis wades in a bog of parental guilt.

LOUIS
Of course, my darling. Daddy'll come home. Did you walk all the way over here? What's wrong?

The bartender is watching this scene with amusement.

BARTENDER
Looks like you been busted, Doc. Last one was on me.

Matty is less amused. She straightens her skirt and frowns at Louis. She catches his eye.

LOUIS
Go outside and let me say good night to Mrs. Martin. I'll be right out.

Eve looks at Matty with blatant hatred.

EVE
Hurry up.

EXT. KING'S BAR -- NIGHT

Eve steps outside. It seems deadly quiet after the noise of the bar. In the distance we hear A TRAIN WHISTLE. Eve peers into the dark towards the sound of the train.

EVE'S POV -- A MAN in a fedora walks slowly along the tracks. Although it is warm, he is wearing an overcoat. He walks with his head down as if deep in thought. There's something ominous about him.

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CONTINUED:

SLOW MOTION -- THE MAN walks in long strides, his overcoat swaying rhythmically. When he is directly in front of Eve, he raises his head.

ON EVE -- Her fear turns to relief.

EVE
Hi, Mr. Moreaux.

LENNY looks right through her as if she doesn't exist. His eyes are bloodshot. His lips are chapped and cracked.

Eve is rooted to the spot as Martin pushes past her and into King's.

INT. KING'S BAR -- CONT.

Lenny enters. The noise is distorted and unbearably loud.

Louis finishes the last of his drink. He looks at Matty and smiles sadly. He touches her face.

LENNY'S POV -- IN SLOW MOTION Louis runs his finger down Matty's cheek. A simple gesture which says everything.

EVE ENTERS and runs to her father.

EVE
Daddy--

LOUIS AND MATTY look up and see Lenny. They recover instantly.

MATTY
Hey, baby...

LOUIS
Join us for a last one, old man?

LENNY
I don't think so, Louis.

Lenny grabs his wife's arm and drags her violently from the bar. As he pulls her through the crowd, patrons turn and watch them.

MATTY
What's wrong with you, Lenny? You must be crazy--

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EXT. KING'S BAR -- CONT.

Lenny pushes Matty through the door. They are followed by Louis and Eve. Louis hurries to catch up with Lenny.

We hear the RUMBLE OF A TRAIN heading into town.

LOUIS
Lenny, don't be a fool--

Lenny releases his wife and turns on Louis. He pushes him violently in the chest.

LENNY
Are you fucking my wife?!

LOUIS
You're drunk, Lenny--

LENNY
You like my wife, Louis?! She's beautiful, isn't she?! ARE YOU FUCKING MY WIFE--

LOUIS
Matty and I are old friends. You know that as well as anyone--

Lenny is raw with pain and anger.

LENNY
I trusted you!! AND YOU BEEN FUCKING MATTY!! I loved you, Louis...

The words cut through Louis like a knife.

LOUIS
I love you too, Lenny...

Eve pulls on her father's arm.

EVE
Let's go, Daddy!

THE TRAIN'S HEADLIGHT appears in the distance, the sound of it getting louder.

Matty takes her husband's arm and pulls him gently.

MATTY
You're drunk, baby... Let me take you home...

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

Lenny shakes Matty off. He grabs Louis by the shirt and pulls him to his face.

LENNY
You ever speak to my wife again and I'll kill you! You understand me?!

He pushes Louis away.

LENNY
(continuing)
Now, get the fuck away from me!

Louis smooths his shirt.

LOUIS
Go home and sleep off that whisky, old man. You can apologize to me tomorrow.

The two men back away from each other. Matty pulls Lenny away. Eve tugs at their father.

MARTIN
Speak to her again and you're dead, Louis!!

Lenny puts his arm around his wife and they slowly walk away. Louis watches them.

EVE
Let's go home, Daddy...

LOUIS' POV -- Lenny and Matty walk away. Matty's wide hips swing from side to side.

Louis smiles.

LOUIS
Night, Matty!

IN EXTREME SLOW MOTION --

LENNY TURNS and pulls a REVOLVER from his overcoat--

THE TRAIN BEARS DOWN ON THEM, whistle blowing, drowning out other sounds--

LENNY AIMS and shouts something we can't hear--

LOUIS PUSHES Eve to the ground as--

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THE BULLET HITS HIM IN THE CHEST--

LENNY FIRES AGAIN, THIS TIME HITTING LOUIS IN THE HEAD--

LOUIS starts to fall--

EVE is on the ground. Her mouth is open in a scream we can't hear--AND WE ARE IN MOZELLE'S VISION--

THE TRAIN becomes a BLACK RUSHING SHADOW, obscuring our view--

We hear the CRACK which is a third gunshot and then the WAIL OF A CHILD SCREAMING--

BLACKOUT:

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. EVE'S BAYOU CEMETERY -- DAY

A huge crowd has turned out for Louis' funeral. Several women weep loudly. Roselyn leans heavily on Mozelle. Both women are stricken. Poe clings to his mother's dress and cries softly. As the MINISTER finishes the prayer--

CISELY becomes hysterical. Grayraven picks her up and carries her towards a line of black cars in the distance.

CLOSE ON EVE -- standing apart from the others. She is ghost-like. Her eyes are wide with shock. Suddenly she sees something that makes her RIGID WITH FEAR--

ELZORA stands far away at the edge of the mourners. She looks directly at Eve.

EVE TEARS HER EYES AWAY AND LOOKS DOWN--

EVE'S POV -- A TINY MOUND OF DIRT at her feet just big enough for a WAX COFFIN.

EVE SCREAMS--

BLACKOUT:

FADE IN:

INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- LOUIS AND ROZ'S BEDROOM -- LATE NIGHT -- Eve, Cisely and Poe sleep exhausted in their mothers arms. Roz hums tunelessly as she cradles her children.

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CONTINUED:

FADE OUT:

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. BAYOU -- DAY -- SOME MONTHS LATER -- The trees are punctuated with slashes of red and gold. Wind blows the moss.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- DAY

Eve, perhaps a little older than we've seen her, is sitting in a low hanging branch of a live oak in front of the Batiste house.

Mozelle approaches from the house and joins her sitting on the branch.

They sit for a moment before Mozelle speaks.

MOZELLE
Last night I had the dream that I was flying. It was such a fine feeling. But then from the corner of my eye, I saw a women drowning in the very same air that was keeping me afloat. And I knew without looking that it was me.

Mozelle gazes, and we LOOK UP at the liquid Louisiana sky through the sheltering branches of the oak.

MOZELLE (O.S.)
I thought that I could save her, but then I heard Louis's voice saying, "Don't look back." So I kept on flying and let her drown.
(beat)
When I woke up, I told Julian I would marry him.

Mozelle looks again at Eve and sees the fear in Eve's eyes.

MOZELLE (CON.)
He wouldn't have it any other way. Maybe God will be kind and allow me to go with him. I'm so tired of being alone.
(beat)
Your daddy gave me a message for you... "Tell Eve I still owe her that dance."

Mozelle leans down, gives Eve a kiss and walks away.

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INT. BATISTE HOUSE -- LOUIS'S STUDY -- DAY

Eve is alone in her father's study. She is going through her father's things. She takes up his stethoscope, listens to her own heart. She picks up Louis's hat, inhales his scent. She picks up a books, leafs through it.

In the book is a plain envelope, addressed in Louis's handwriting, "To Mozelle". In the envelope is a letter.

CLOSE ON EVE -- Her hands tremble as she opens the letter. She reads the first lines aloud.

EVE
(reading)
"Mozelle, It's been two hours since we spoke, and finally I feel calm enough to write this..."

Eve unfolds the letter and smooths it on her lap. As she continue's reading we hear LOUIS' VOICE...

LOUIS (V.O.)
I realize that your accusations, however shocking and cruel, stem from some weakness in myself that allows you to believe the worst of me. As you and I know, I'm just a small town doctor pushing aspirin to the elderly, but to a certain type of woman, I'm a hero. I need to be a hero sometimes. That's my weakness. That much is true.

CLOSE ON EVE -- reading.

LOUIS (V.O.)
(continuing)
But how, Mozelle, could I have sunk in your estimation to the leech depths where you would accuse me of deliberately abusing my most beloved child? I am guilty in the sense that I adore her, and I allowed her to adore me. It was a sweet indulgence... But nothing in her behavior prepared me for what happened the night of the storm...

A FLASH OF Lightning we're in A FLASHBACK--

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INT. BATISTE PARLOR -- 1962 -- NIGHT

The storm rages. Roz and Louis have reached the climax of their argument.

LOUIS (V.O.)
Roz and I had a terrible fight. I guess it was inevitable.

Roz runs from the room in tears. Louis throws himself into an armchair and puts his face in his hands.

LOUIS (V.O.)
(continuing)
I knew Cisely could never sleep through a fight like that, so I wasn't surprised when she came downstairs. Maybe I was even waiting for her.

Cisely enters. She crosses to pour her father a drink. She brings it to him and massages his neck.

LOUIS (V.O.)
(continuing)
She made me a drink and sat on my lap. I let myself wallow in filial comfort.

Cisely sits on Louis' lap and wipes a tear from his face. After a moment she kisses him.

LOUIS (V.O.)
(continuing)
Mozelle, I swear, the first kiss was the sweetest kiss a daughter could give to a drunk and guilt ridden father. A kiss of redemption. In the next moment, it had gone wrong...

CISELY PRESSES HER LIPS AGAINST HER FATHER'S. HE RETURNS THE KISS--FOR A MOMENT THEY KISS PASSIONATELY--

LOUIS (V.O.)
From my bourbon haze it took me a second to realize that my daughter was kissing me like a woman. This is where I blame myself--

LOUIS SMACKS HER ACROSS THE FACE, KNOCKING HER TO THE FLOOR.

ANGLE ON THOMY -- He moans loudly and flails in his chair by the window.

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CONTINUED:

LOUIS (V.O.)
I was so startled that I hit her and she fell to the floor.

Louis stands over Cisely and shouts at her, angrily. She looks up at him wretchedly. A lost little girl who's been betrayed by her first love.

LOUIS (V.O.)
(continuing)
The look she gave me almost stopped my heart. And I knew I had lost her.

Louis is suddenly humiliated. He tries to help her up but she pulls away from him and runs from the room. Louis is in agony. He staggers back and forth blindly.

THOMY watches him.

LOUIS (V.O.)
(continuing)
Mozelle, I would give my life to have that moment back. I would hold her and comfort her. We would talk through her confusion.. and I would put her to bed with the boundaries between us intact. I love her more than my life. I hope that one day she can forgive me.

END FLASHBACK --

EXT. BAYOU -- DAY

CISELY sits with her back against a tree, half dozing in the cool autumn air. A shadow falls across her face. Her eyes flutter open.

EVE stands over her. Her face is infused with emotion. Her eyes are wide, accusing. The letter is clutched in her hand.

EVE
You lied to me about daddy! You lied!

Cisely looks up, confused.

CISELY
What?

Eve throws the letter at her sister. It flutters to the ground.

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CONTINUED:

EVE
Daddy wrote Mozelle a letter. You were lying!

Cisely makes no move to touch the wrinkled paper. She stands and faces Eve.

CISELY
I wasn't lying.

EVE
You said he attacked you!

CISELY
I know what I said.

EVE
I believed you... And I hated him. I hated him for you, Cisely.

Slowly Cisely's face crumbles. She leans her forehead against her sister's.

CISELY
He hurt me, Eve. He hurt me so badly I wanted to die.

Eve searches her sister's eyes.

EVE
Tell me what happened, Cisely. I want you to tell me the truth. Please.... I have to know!

Cisely shakes her head.

CISELY
I can't...

In a gesture at once familiar, Eve extends her hands. After a long moment, Cisely places her hands on her sister's. Eve closes her eyes.

INSTANTLY WE SEE -- EXTREME CLOSE UP -- THE FIRST KISS BETWEEN LOUIS AND CISELY--THEIR LIPS MEET--

THE IMAGES BECOMES CONFUSING-- SLAPS HER--THOMY SCREAMS--A DECANTER SHATTERS--LOUIS AND CISELY KISS--HE SLAPS HER, SLAPS HER, SLAPS HER--

ON EVE AND CISELY -- Cisely buries her head against Eve's chest.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (2)

CISELY
I can't... I don't know what happened... I don't know... I don't know what happened.. I don't know...

ANGLE ON -- WATER

THE LETTER is set to float. The ink bleeds and fades as it drifts away from us.

WE PULL BACK --

EVE AND CISELY are kneeling at the edge of the water. they watch as the tides pull the letter away.

EVE (V.O.)
The summer my father said goodnight, I was ten years old... My brother, Poe, was nine, and my sister, Cisely, had just turned fourteen.

LONG ANGLE --

They stand and hold hands.

EVE (V.O.; cont'd)
We are the descendants of Eve and Jean-Paul Batiste... I am Eve Batiste, heir to a family legacy... Like others before me, I have the gift of sight... But the truth changes color, depending on the light. And tomorrow can be clearer than yesterday.

EXT. BATISTE HOUSE -- DAY

Thomy, sits on the veranda in his wheelchair, watching.

CLOSE ON THOMY -- as he watches the sisters. Does he see them? Is he aware? Does he remember?

EVE (V.O.; cont'd)
Memory is a selection of images... Some elusive, others printed indelibly on the brain...

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EXT. EVE'S BAYOU -- SUNSET

Eve and Cisely are tiny figures, looking out over the water. We drift up and away from them. We see across field, bayou and forest. It is dark, secretive and painfully beautiful.

EVE (V.O.; cont'd)
Each image is like a thread... Each thread woven together to make a tapestry of intricate texture... And the tapestry tells a story... And the story is our past...

WE SEE THE MOON REFLECTED ON THE BAYOU AS WE...

FADE TO BLACK:

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